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UTILITY PATENT APPLICATION TRANSMITTAL

(Only for new nonprovisional applications under 37 C.F.R. § 1.53(b))

Attorney Docket No. 1274.024G
First Inventor or Application Identifier George B. Rockstein
Title AUTOMATIC BAR CODE SYMBOL READING . . .
Express Mail Label No.

APPLICATION ELEMENTS

See MPEP chapter 600 concerning utility patent application contents.

1. ☒ * Fee Transmittal Form (e.g., PTO/SB/17)
(Submit an original and a duplicate for fee processing)
2. ☒ Specification [Total Pages 103]
(preferred arrangement set forth below)
- Descriptive title of the invention
 - Cross References to Related Applications
 - Statement Regarding Fed sponsored R & D
 - Reference to Microfiche Appendix
 - Background of the invention
 - Brief Summary of the invention
 - Brief Description of the Drawings (if filed)
 - Detailed Description
 - Claim(s)
 - Abstract of the Disclosure
3. ☒ Drawing(s) (35 U.S.C. 113) [Total Sheets 55]
4. Oath or Declaration [Total Pages 3]
- a. ☐ Newly executed (original or copy)
- b. ☒ Copy from a prior application (37 C.F.R. § 1.63(d))
(for continuation/divisional with Box 16 completed)
- i. ☐ DELETION OF INVENTOR(S)
Signed statement attached deleting inventor(s) named in the prior application, see 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.63(d)(2) and 1.33(b).

* NOTE FOR ITEMS 1 & 13: IN ORDER TO BE ENTITLED TO PAY SMALL ENTITY FEES, A SMALL ENTITY STATEMENT IS REQUIRED (37 C.F.R. § 1.27), EXCEPT IF ONE FILED IN A PRIOR APPLICATION IS RELIED UPON (37 C.F.R. § 1.28).

ADDRESS TO: Assistant Commissioner for Patents
Box Patent Application
Washington, DC 20231

5. ☐ Microfiche Computer Program (Appendix)
6. Nucleotide and/or Amino Acid Sequence Submission (if applicable, all necessary)
- a. ☐ Computer Readable Copy
- b. ☐ Paper Copy (identical to computer copy)
- c. ☐ Statement verifying identity of above copies

ACCOMPANYING APPLICATION PARTS

7. ☒ Assignment Papers (cover sheet & document(s))
8. ☐ 37 C.F.R. § 3.73(b) Statement (when there is an assignee) ☐ Power of Attorney
9. ☐ English Translation Document (if applicable)
10. ☒ Information Disclosure Statement (IDS)/PTO-1449 ☐ Copies of IDS Citations
11. ☒ Preliminary Amendment
12. ☒ Return Receipt Postcard (MPEP 503) (Should be specifically itemized)
13. ☐ * Small Entity Statement(s) filed in prior application, (PTO/SB/09-12) Status still proper and desired
14. ☐ Certified Copy of Priority Document(s) (if foreign priority is claimed)
15. ☐ Other: check for \$760.00

16. If a CONTINUING APPLICATION, check appropriate box, and supply the requisite information below and in a preliminary amendment:

☒ Continuation ☐ Divisional ☐ Continuation-in-part (CIP)

of prior application No: 08,890,576

Prior application information: Examiner THIEN LE

Group / Art Unit: 2514

For CONTINUATION or DIVISIONAL APPS only: The entire disclosure of the prior application, from which an oath or declaration is supplied under Box 4b, is considered a part of the disclosure of the accompanying continuation or divisional application and is hereby incorporated by reference. The incorporation can only be relied upon when a portion has been inadvertently omitted from the submitted application parts.

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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In Re Continuation Application
Base On Copending Application of

Applicants : George B. Rockstein, et al.
Serial No. : 08/890,576
Filed : July 9, 1997
Examiner : Thien Le
Group Art Unit : 2514
Attorney Docket No. : 1274-024B

Hon. Commissioner of Patents
and Trademarks
Washington, D.C. 20231

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

Sir:

Preliminary to the Examination of the above-referenced application, kindly amend said application as follows:

IN THE CLAIMS

Please cancel Claims 79-86 without prejudice, and add new claims 87-94 as follows:

87. A system for reading code symbols comprising:

(A) a plurality of code symbol reading devices, each said code symbol reading device including
a scanning mechanism for automatically scanning a code symbol on an object,

a processing mechanism for producing symbol character data in a form representative of the scanned code symbol,

a synthesizing mechanism for synthesizing a group of data packets, each having a plurality of data fields containing codes for identifying the code symbol reading device synthesizing the data packet in the group thereof, a data packet number for identifying each said data packet, a data packet group number for identifying the group to which each said data packet belongs, and a sequence of digital data bits representative of the symbol character data, and

an RF signal generator for generating an electromagnetic signal having its frequency modulated by the digital data bits representative of said group of data packets, and transmitting said modulated signal over a predetermined data transmission range in free space,

wherein the frequency deviation of the signal produced by each said code symbol reading device is substantially the same and equal to a preselected frequency deviation value; and

(B) a plurality of base units, each said base unit being assigned to one said code symbol reading device, and positionable within the predetermined transmitting range thereof, and including

a receiver for receiving a modulated carrier signal transmitted from said any one of the code symbol reading devices,

a demodulator for demodulating any one of the received modulated carrier signals so as to recover at least one data packet therefrom,

a processing mechanism for analyzing the recovered data packet to determine whether the received data packet was synthesized by its assigned code symbol reading device, and if so, then recovering the symbol character data therefrom,

a buffer for buffering the symbol character data recovered from the data packet synthesized by the preassigned code symbol reading device, and

a notification mechanism for automatically producing, in response to the recovery and buffering of the symbol character data, an acknowledgement signal perceptible to the user of the assigned code symbol reading device when the user is situated within the predetermined data transmission range, so as to inform the user of the code symbol reading

device that the symbol character data produced thereby has been received and recovered at the assigned base unit. --

88. The system of claim 87, wherein each said code symbol reading device comprises a laser diode for producing a visible laser that is repeatedly scanned across the code symbol. --

89. The system of claim 87, wherein the acknowledgment signal comprises an acoustic signal audible to the user of the code symbol reading device when the user is situated within the predetermined data transmission range.--

90. The system of claim 89, wherein the acknowledgement signal further comprises a light signal visible to the user of code symbol reading device when the user is situated within the predetermined data transmission range.--

91. The system of claim 89, wherein the acoustic signal produced by each said base unit has at least one uniquely identifiable pitch characteristic assigned to the preassigned code symbol reading device.--

92. The system of claim 87, wherein each said base unit comprises
a circuit tuned to the preselected frequency, and
a receiving element operably associated with the circuit, for receiving the modulated carrier signal transmitted from any one or more of said code symbol reading devices.--

93. The system of claim 87, wherein each said base unit further comprises
data interface circuitry for interfacing the data output port of a computer keyboard with the data input port of a computer system, and
a data conversion mechanism for converting the data format of the symbol character data recovered at the base unit into a data format which is substantially identical to the data format of data produced from the output of the computer keyboard.--

94. The system of claim 87, wherein each said base unit further comprises a data processing unit selected from the group consisting of: a slot-type bar code symbol reader, a projection-type bar code symbol reader, a cash register, a host computer system, and a portable collection device.--

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

On Page 1, before "BACKGROUND OF INVENTION" insert -- This is a continuation of Application Serial No. 08/890,576 entitled "Automatic Bar Code Symbol Reading System And Method Of Reading Bar Code Symbols Using Same", filed on July 9, 1997 which is a Continuation of Application Serial No. 08/292,237 entitled "Portable Code Symbol Reading Device With One-Way Wireless Data Packet Transmission Link To Base Unit Employing Condition Dependent Acoustical Signalling For Data Packet Reception Acknowledgement" (AS AMENDED) filed August 17, 1994.--

IN THE TITLE OF INVENTION:

Please rewrite the "Title of Invention" as follows:

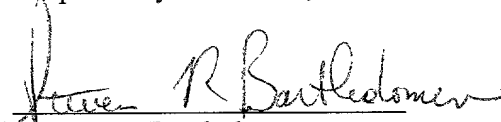
--SYSTEM FOR READING BAR CODE SYMBOLS USING
PORTABLE BAR CODE SYMBOL READERS HAVING RF
SIGNAL TRANSMISSION LINKS WITH BASE STATIONS--

REMARKS

The present application is being filed for continued prosecution of subject matter disclosed in Application Serial No. 08/890,576 filed July 9, 1997.

Dated: July 2, 1999

Respectfully submitted,


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**AUTOMATIC LASER SCANNING SYSTEM AND
METHOD OF READING BAR CODE SYMBOLS USING SAME**

Inventors: Carl H. Knowles
George B. Rockstein
David M. Wilz
Charles A. Naylor

THIS APPLICATION IS A CONTINUATION-IN-PART OF:
APPLICATION SERIAL NO. 07/761,123

ENTITLED "METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR AUTOMATICALLY
READING BAR CODE SYMBOLS"

FILED ON SEPTEMBER 17, 1991

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

The present invention relates generally to laser scanning systems, and more particularly to an automatic bar code symbol reading system in which an automatic hand-supportable laser scanner can be interchangeably utilized as either a portable hand-held laser scanner in an automatic "hands-on" mode of operation, or as a stationary laser projection scanner in an automatic "hands-free" mode of operation.

Brief Description of the Prior Art

Bar code symbols have become widely used in many commercial environments such as, for example, point-of-sale (POS) stations in retail stores and supermarkets, inventory and document tracking, and diverse data control applications. To meet the growing demands of this recent innovation, bar code symbol readers of various types have been developed for scanning and decoding bar code symbol patterns and producing symbol character data for use as input in automated data processing systems.

In general, prior art bar code symbol readers using laser scanning mechanisms can be classified into two categories.

5 The first category of bar code symbol readers includes systems having lightweight, portable hand-held laser scanners which can be supported in the hand of the user. The user positions the hand-held laser scanner at a specified distance from the object bearing the bar code symbol, manually activates the scanner to initiate reading, 10 and then moves the scanner over other objects bearing bar code symbols to be read. Prior art bar code symbol readers illustrative of this first category are disclosed in U.S. Patent Nos. 4,387,297 to Swartz; 4,575,625 to Knowles; 4,845,349 to Cherry; 4,825,057 to Swartz, et al.; 4,903,848 15 to Knowles; 5,107,100 to Shepard, et al.; 5,080,456 to Katz, et al.; and 5,047,617 to Shepard et al.

The second category of bar code symbol readers includes systems having stationary laser scanners supported on or built into an immovable structure such as a supermarket 20 counter. These laser scanners are referred to as countertop scanners and typically utilize a moving laser beam to create a laser scan pattern. Each object bearing a bar code symbol to be read is oriented by the user and then moved through the laser scan pattern in order to read the bar code symbol. 25 Prior art bar code symbol scanners illustrative of this second category are disclosed in U.S. Patent Nos. 4,086,476 to King; 4,960,985 to Knowles; and 4,713,532 to Knowles.

30 While prior art hand-held and stationary laser scanners have played an important role in the development of the bar code symbol industry, these devices have, however, suffered from a number of shortcomings and drawbacks. For example,

hand-held laser scanners, although portable and lightweight, are not always convenient to use in assembly-line applications where the user processes bar coded objects over an extended period of time, or where the user requires the use of both hands in order to manipulate the objects. In some applications, hand-held laser scanners are difficult to manipulate while simultaneously moving objects or performing other tasks at a point-of-sale terminal. Stationary laser scanners, on the other hand, provide a desired degree of flexibility in many applications by allowing the user to manipulate bar coded objects with both hands. However, by their nature, stationary laser scanners render scanning large, heavy objects a difficult task as such objects must be manually moved into or through the laser scan field.

Attempting to eliminate the problems associated with the use of hand-held and stationary laser scanners, U.S. Patent No. 4,766,297 to McMillan discloses a bar code symbol scanning system which combines the advantages of hand-held and stationary fixed laser scanners into a single scanning system which can be used in either a hands-on or hands-free mode of operation.

The bar code symbol scanning system in U.S. Patent No. 4,766,297 includes a portable hand-held laser scanning device for generating electrical signals descriptive of a scanned bar code symbol. In the hands-on mode of operation, a trigger on the hand-held laser scanning device is manually actuated each time a bar code symbol on an object is to be read. The system further includes a fixture having a head portion for receiving and supporting the hand-held laser scanning device, and a base portion above which the head portion is supported at a predetermined distance. In the

hands-free mode of operation, the hand-held laser scanning device is supported by the fixture head portion above the fixture base portion in order to allow objects bearing bar code symbols to pass between the head and base portions of the fixture. In order to detect the presence of an object between the head and base portions of the fixture, the fixture also includes an object sensor operably connected to the hand-held laser scanning device. When the object sensor senses an object between the head portion and the base portion, the object sensor automatically initiates the hand-held laser scanning device supported in the fixture to read the bar code symbol on the detected object.

While the bar code symbol scanning system of U.S. Patent No. 4,776,297 permits reading of printed bar code information using either a portable "hands-on" or stationary "hands-free" mode of operation, this system suffers from several significant shortcomings and drawbacks as well.

In particular, in the hands-on mode of operation, scanning bar code symbols requires manually actuating a trigger each time a bar code symbol is to be read. In the hands-free mode of operation, scanning bar code symbols requires passing the object bearing the bar code between the head and base portions of the fixture. However, in many instances where both hands are required to manipulate a bar coded object, the object is too large to be passed between the head and base portions of the fixture and thus scanning of the bar code symbol is not possible.

Thus, there is a great need in the bar code symbol reading art for a bar code symbol reading system which overcomes the above described shortcomings and drawbacks of prior art devices and techniques, while providing greater versatility in its use.

Objects and Summary of the Invention

Accordingly, it is a primary object of the present invention to provide a fully automatic bar code symbol reading system having an automatic hand-supportable laser scanning device which can be used as either a portable hand-supported laser scanner in an automatic hands-on mode of operation, or as a stationary laser projection scanner in an automatic hands-free mode of operation.

It is another object of the present invention to provide such an automatic bar code symbol reading system, in which one or more bar code symbols on an object can be automatically read in a consecutive manner.

A further object is to provide such an automatic bar code symbol reading device, in which the automatic hand-supportable bar code (symbol) reading device has an infrared light object detection field which spatially encompasses at least a portion of its visible laser light scan field along the operative scanning range of the device, thereby improving the laser beam pointing efficiency of the device during the automatic bar code reading process of the present invention.

Another object of the present invention is to provide such an automatic bar code reading system in which a support frame is provided for supporting the hand-supportable housing of the device in a selected mounting position, and permitting complete gripping of the handle portion of the hand-supportable housing prior to removing it from the support frame.

A further object of the present invention is to provide such an automatic bar code symbol reading system in which the hand-supportable bar code reading device has long and

short-range modes of object detection within its object detection field. In one illustrative embodiment, the long and short-range modes of object detection are manually selectable by the user by manual activation of a switch on the hand-supportable housing of the device. In another illustrative embodiment, the long-range mode of object detection is automatically selected when the hand-supportable bar code reading device is placed within the support stand during the hands-free mode of operation. In this illustrative embodiment, the short-range mode of object detection is automatically selected whenever the hand-supportable bar code reading device is picked up from the support stand and used in its hands-on mode of operation.

A further object of the present invention is to provide such an automatic bar code symbol reading system, in which the hand-supportable bar code reading device has long and short-range modes of bar code presence detection within its scan field. In one illustrative embodiment, the short-range mode of bar code presence detection is manually selectable by manual activation of a switch on the hand-supportable housing of the device. In another illustrative embodiment, the short-range mode of bar code presence detection is automatically selected when the hand-supportable bar code reading device is placed within the support stand, or alternatively, upon decoding a predesignated bar code symbol preprogrammed to induce the short-range mode of bar code presence detection. In the short-range mode of bar code presence detection, the automatic bar code reading device not only detects the presence of a bar code within the scan field by analysis of collected scan data, but it further processes the collected scan data to produce digital count

data representative of the measured time interval between bar and/or space transitions. Bar code symbols present within the short-range of the scan field, produce scan data having time interval characteristics falling within a prespecified timing data range. Using the results of this analysis, only bar code symbols scanned within the short-range field are deemed "detected," and only bar code symbols detected within the short-range of the scan field activate the decoding module of the device and thus enable bar symbol reading.

A further object of the present invention is automatic bar code symbol reading system for portable bar code reading devices. In one embodiment, a bar code symbol reader includes means for detecting bar code symbols within a short-range of the scan field and thus enabling bar symbol reading.

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A further object of the present invention
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embodiment, the long-range mode
automatically selected when the
reading device is placed in
hands-free mode of operation
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It is another object of the present invention to provide an automatic hand-supportable bar code reading device which has both long and short-range modes of object detection and bar code symbol reading, automatically
5 selectable by placing the hand-supportable device within its support stand and removing it therefrom. With this particular embodiment of the present invention, the automatic bar code symbol reading system can be used in various bar code symbol reading applications, such as, for
10 example, charge coupled device (CCD) scanner emulation and bar code "menu" reading in the hands-on short-range mode of operation, and counter-top projection scanning in the hands-free long-range mode of operation.

An even further object of the present invention is to
15 provide an automatic hand-supportable bar code reading device which prevents multiple reading of the same bar code symbol due to dwelling of the laser scanning beam upon a bar code symbol for an extended period of time.

A further object of the present invention is to provide
20 a point-of-sale station incorporating the automatic bar code symbol reading system of the present invention.

It is a further object of the present invention to provide an automatic hand-supportable bar code reading device having a control system which has a finite number of
25 states through which the device may pass during its automatic operation, in response to diverse conditions automatically detected within the object detection and scan fields of the device.

It is yet a further object of the present invention to
30 provide a portable, fully automatic bar code symbol reading system which is compact, simple to use and versatile.

Yet a further object of the present invention is to provide a novel method of reading bar code symbols using a automatic hand-supportable laser scanning device.

These and further objects of the present invention will
5 become apparent hereinafter and in the claims.

Brief Description of the Drawings

For a fuller understanding of the objects of the present invention, the Detailed Description of the Illustrated Embodiment of the Present Invention will be
10 taken in connection with the drawings, wherein:

Fig. 1 is a perspective view of the illustrative embodiment of the automatic bar code symbol reading system of the present invention, showing the hand-supportable laser bar code symbol reading device supported within the scanner support stand for automatic hands-free operation;
15

Fig. 1A is an elevated front view of the automatic bar code symbol reading system of Fig. 1, showing the light transmission window of the hand-supportable bar code symbol reading device while supported within the scanner support stand;
20

Fig. 1B is a plan view of the automatic bar code symbol reading system shown in Fig. 1;

Fig. 1C is a bottom view of the automatic bar code symbol reading system shown in Fig. 1;

25 Fig. 2 is a perspective view of the automatic hand-supportable bar code symbol reading device of the system hereof, shown being used in the automatic hands-on mode of operation;

Fig. 2A is a elevated, cross-sectional side view taken
30 along the longitudinal extent of the automatic bar code

symbol reading device of Fig. 2, showing various hardware and software components utilized in realizing the illustrative embodiment of the automatic hand-supportable bar code symbol reading device of the present invention;

5 Fig. 2B is a cross-sectional plan view taken along line 2B-2B of Fig. 2A, showing the various components used in realizing the illustrative embodiment of the automatic bar code symbol reading device;

10 Fig. 2C is an elevated partially fragmented cross-sectional view of the head portion of the automatic hand-supportable bar code symbol reading device of the present invention, illustrating an electro-optical arrangement utilized in transmitting pulsed infrared light signals over the object detection field of the device;

15 Fig. 2D is an elevated partially fragmented cross-sectional view of the head portion of the automatic hand-supportable bar code symbol reading device of the present invention, illustrating the electro-optical arrangement utilized in producing the object detection field of the device;

20

 Fig. 3 is an elevated side view of the hand-supportable bar code symbol reading device of the illustrative embodiment of the present invention, illustrating the spatial relationship between the object detection and scan fields of the device, and the long and short-ranges of programmed object detection, bar code presence detection, and bar code symbol reading;

25

 Fig. 3A is a plan view of the automatic hand-supportable bar code symbol reading device taken along line 3A-3A of FIG. 3;

30

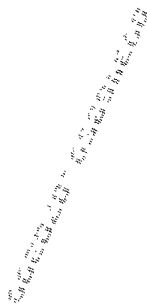
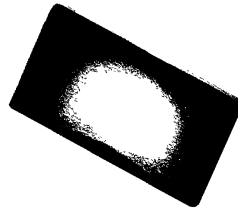


Fig. 4 is a system block functional diagram of the automatic hand-supportable bar code symbol reading device of the present invention, illustrating the principal components integrated with the system controller thereof;

5 Fig. 5 is a block functional diagram of a first embodiment of the object-detection mechanism for the automatic hand-supportable bar code symbol reading device of the present invention;

10 Fig. 6 is a block functional diagram of a second embodiment of the object detection mechanism for the automatic hand-supportable bar code symbol reading device of the present invention;

15 Figs. 7A and 7B, taken together, show a chart of a system control program (i.e. Main Routine) contained within the control system of the automatic bar code symbol reading device. Various courses of programmed system operation in the illustrative embodiment may undergo

20 Figs. 8A and 8B, taken together, show a chart of an auxiliary system control routine. The Auxiliary System Control Routine provides the hand-supportable bar code symbol reading device of the present invention with selectable modes of object detection and bar code

25 Fig. 9 is a state transition diagram which states that the automatic bar code symbol reading device of the present invention during the course of operation

30 Fig. 10 is a block functional diagram of the scanner system

Fig. 10A is a perspective view of the base plate of the scanner support stand of the present invention, with the adapter module mounted thereon;

Fig. 10B is a perspective, partially broken away view of the assembled scanner support stand of the present invention, showing the scanner cable, power supply cable and communication cable operably associated therewith and routed through respective apertures formed in the scanner support frame;

Figs. 11A through 11D are perspective views of a point-of-sale system, showing the scanner support stand of the present invention supported on a horizontal countertop surface and operably connected to an electronic cash register, with the automatic hand-supportable bar code symbol reading device being used in its hand-held short-range mode of operation;

Figs. 12A and 12B are perspective views illustrating the steps carried out during the installation of the scanner support stand of the present invention onto a vertical counter wall surface;

Fig. 13 is an elevated side view of the automatic bar code symbol reading system of the present invention, shown mounted onto the vertical counter wall surface of Figs. 12A and 12B;

Fig. 13A is a plan view of the automatic bar code symbol reading system of the present invention taken along line 13A-13A of Fig. 13;

Fig. 13B is a cross-sectional view of the scanner support stand of the present invention, taken along line 13B-13B of Fig. 13;

Fig. 13C is a cross-sectional view of the assembled scanner stand, taken along line 13C-13C of Fig. 15A;

Fig. 14 is perspective views showing the scanner support stand mounted on a vertical counter wall surface, and the automatic hand-supportable bar code symbol reading device being used in its automatic hands-free long-range mode of operation;

Figs. 15A and 15B are perspective views showing the scanner support stand mounted on a vertical counter wall surface, and the automatic hand-supportable bar code symbol reading device being used in its automatic hand-held short-range mode of operation;

Fig. 16 is a perspective view of a point-of-sale station according to the present invention, showing the scanner support stand pivotally supported above a horizontal counter surface by way of a pedestal base mounted under an electronic cash register, and the automatic hand-supportable bar code symbol reading device received in the scanner support stand and being used in its automatic hands-free long-range mode of operation;

Fig. 17A and 17B are perspective views of a point-of-sale station according to the present invention, showing the scanner support stand pivotally supported above a horizontal counter surface by way of the pedestal base illustrated in Fig. 16, and the automatic hand-supportable bar code symbol reading device being used in its automatic hand-held short-range mode of operation;

Fig. 18 is an elevated side view of the point-of-sale system of Figs. 16A, 16B and 17, illustrating the rotational freedom of the scanner support stand about the x axis of the pivotal joint assembly;

Fig. 18A is an elevated, partially cross-sectional view of the base plate of the scanner support stand and the pivotal joint assembly connecting the scanner support stand to the pedestal base so as to provide three-degrees of freedom to the scanner support stand with respect to the stationary pedestal base;

Fig. 18B is a partially fragmented view of the scanner support stand, pivotal joint assembly and pedestal base taken along the y axis of the pivotal joint assembly, illustrating the rotational freedom of the scanner support stand about the y axis; and

Fig. 18C is a perspective view of the scanner support stand and pedestal base assembly taken along the -z axis of the pivotal joint assembly, illustrating the rotational freedom of the scanner support stand about the z axis of the pivotal joint assembly.

Detailed Description of the Illustrated Embodiment of the Present Invention

In Fig. 1, the automatic laser bar code symbol reading system of the present invention, is illustrated. As shown, automatic bar code symbol reading system 1 comprises a portable, automatic hand-supportable bar code (symbol) reading device 2 operably associated with scanner support stand 3 of the present invention. Operable interconnection of hand-supportable bar code reading device 2 and scanner support stand 3 is achieved by a flexible multiwire scanner cable 5 extending from bar code symbol device 2 into scanner support stand 3. Operable interconnection of scanner support stand 3 and a host system 6 (e.g. electronic cash register system, data collection device, etc.) is achieved

by a flexible multiwire communications cable 7 extending from scanner support stand 3 and plugged directly into the data-input communications port of host system 6. In the illustrative embodiment, electrical power from a low voltage power supply (not shown) is provided to scanner support stand 3 by way of a flexible power cable 8.

As illustrated in Fig. 1 through 1C, scanner support stand 3 is particularly adapted for receiving and supporting hand-supportable bar code reading device 2 in a selected position without user support, thus providing a stationary, automatic hands-free mode of operation. In general, hand-supportable bar code reading device 2 includes an ultra-light weight hand-supportable housing 9 having a contoured handle portion 9A and a head portion 9B. As will be described in greater detail hereinafter, head portion 9B encloses electro-optical components which are used to generate and project a visible laser beam through a light transmissive window 10, and to repeatedly scan the projected laser beam across a scan field 11 defined external to the hand-supportable housing.

As illustrated in Figs. 1 through 1C, scanner support stand 3 includes a support frame 12 which comprises a base portion 12A, a head portion support structure 12B, handle portion support structure 12C and a finger accommodating recess 12D. As shown, base portion 12A has a longitudinal extent and is adapted for selective positioning with respect to a support surface, e.g. countertop surface, counter wall surface, etc. Head portion support structure 12B is operably associated with base portion 12A, for receiving and supporting the head portion of the hand-supportable bar code reading device. Similarly, handle portion support

structure 12C is operably associated with base portion 12A, for receiving and supporting the handle portion of the hand-supportable bar code symbol reading device. In order that the user's hand can completely grasp the handle portion of the hand-supportable bar code reading device, that is prior to removing it off and away from the scanner support stand as illustrated in Fig. 14A, finger accommodating recess 12D is disposed between head and handle portion support structures 12B and 12C and above base portion 12A of the support frame. In this way, finger accommodating recess 12D is laterally accessible as shown in Fig. 13 so that when the handle and head portions 9A and 9B are received within and supported by handle portion support structure 12B and head portion support structure 12C, respectively, the fingers of a user's hand can be easily inserted through finger accommodating recess 12D and completely encircle the handle portion of the hand-supportable device, as illustrated in Fig. 14A.

A more detailed description of the structure, functions and operation of the scanner support stand of the present invention will be provided hereinafter referring to Figs. 10 through 16B. However, referring to Figs. 1 and 10 through 13, attention will be first accorded to the illustrative embodiment of the automatic hand-supportable bar code reading device of the invention.

As illustrated in Figs. 2 through 2B in particular, head portion 9B continuously extends into contoured handle portion 9A at an obtuse angle α which, in the illustrative embodiment, is about 146 degrees. It is understood, however, that in other embodiments obtuse angle α may be in the range of about 135 to about 180 degrees. As this

ergonomic housing design is sculpted (i.e. form-fitted) to the human hand, automatic hands-on scanning is rendered as easy and effortless as waving ones hand. Also, this ergonomic housing design eliminates the risks of musculoskeletal disorders, such as carpal tunnel syndrome, which can result from repeated biomechanical stress commonly associated with pointing prior art gun-shaped scanners at bar code symbols, squeezing a trigger to activate the laser scanning beam, and then releasing the trigger.

As illustrated in Figs. 2 through 3A, the head portion of housing 9 has a transmission aperture 13 formed in upper portion of front panel 14A, to permit visible laser light to exit and enter the housing, as will be described in greater detail hereinafter. The lower portion of front panel 14B is optically opaque, as are all other surfaces of the hand-supportable housing.

As illustrated in Figs. 2, 3 and 3A in particular, automatic hand-supportable bar code reading device 2 generates two different fields external to the hand-supportable housing, in order to carry out automatic bar code symbol reading according to the principles of the present invention. The first field, referred to as the "object detection field", indicated by broken and dotted lines, is provided externally to the housing for detecting energy reflected off an object bearing a bar code symbol, located within the object detection field. The second field, referred to as the "scan field", having at least one laser beam scanning plane is provided external to the housing for scanning a bar code symbol on an object in the object detection field. In the preferred embodiment, such scanning is achieved with a visible laser beam which

produces laser scan data which is collected for the purpose of detecting the presence of a bar code symbol within the scan field, and subsequently reading (i.e. scanning and decoding) the detected bar code symbol.

5 In general, detected energy reflected from an object during object detection, can be optical radiation or acoustical energy, either sensible or non-sensible by the user, and may be either generated from the automatic bar code reading device or an external ambient source. As will
10 be described in greater detail hereinafter, the provision of such energy is preferably achieved by transmitting a wide beam of pulsed infrared light away from transmission aperture 13 and substantially parallel to longitudinal axis 15 of the head portion of the hand-supportable housing. In
15 the preferred embodiment, the object detection field, from which such reflected energy is collected, is designed to have a narrowly diverging pencil-like geometry of three-dimensional volumetric expanse, which is spatially coincident with at least a portion of the transmitted
20 infrared light beam. This feature of the present invention ensures that an object residing within the object detection field will be illuminated by the infrared light beam, and that infrared light reflected therefrom will be directed generally towards the transmission aperture of the housing
25 where it can be automatically detected to indicate the presence of the object within the object detection field. In response, a visible laser beam is automatically generated within the head portion of the housing, projected through the transmission aperture and repeatedly scanned across the
30 scan field, within which at least a portion of the detected object lies. At least a portion of the scanned laser light

beam will be scattered and reflected off the object and directed back towards and through light transmissive window 10 for collection and detection within the head portion of the housing, and subsequently processed in a manner which will be described in detail hereinafter. To ensure that the user can quickly align the visible laser beam with bar code symbol on the detected object, the object detection field is designed to spatially encompass at least a portion of the scan field along the operative scanning range of the device, as illustrated in Figs. 3 and 3A. This structural feature of the present invention provides the user with an increased degree of control, as once an object is detected, minimal time will be required by the user to point the visible laser beam towards the bar code symbol for scanning. In effect, the laser beam pointing efficiency of the device is markedly improved during the automatic bar code reading process, as it is significantly easier for the user to align the laser beam across the bar code symbol upon object detection.

To more fully appreciate the mechanisms employed in order to generate the object detection and scan fields of automatic bar code reading device of the present invention, reference is best made to the operative elements contained within the hand-supportable housing of the device.

As shown in Fig. 4, automatic bar code reading device 2 comprises a number of system components, namely, an object detection circuit 16, laser scanning mechanism 17, photoreceiving circuit 18, analog-to-digital (A/D) conversion circuit 19, bar code presence detection module 30, bar code scan range detection module 21, symbol decoding module 22, data format conversion module 23, symbol character data storage unit 24, and data transmission

circuit 25. In addition, a magnetic field sensing circuit 26 is provided for detecting scanner support stand 3, while a manual switch 27 is provided for selecting long or short-range modes of object detection, bar code presence detection and/or bar code symbol reading, which will be described in great detail hereinafter. As illustrated, these components are operably associated with a programmable system controller 28 which provides a great degree of versatility in system control, capability and operation. The structure, function and advantages of this system controller will become apparent hereinafter.

In the illustrated embodiment, system controller 28, bar code presence detection module 20, bar code scan range detection module 21, symbol decoding module 22, and data format conversion module 23 are realized using a single programmable device, such as a microprocessor having accessible program and buffer memory, and external timing circuitry. It is understood, however, that any of these elements may be realized using separate discrete components as will be readily apparent to those with ordinary skill in the art.

Automatic hand-supportable bar code reading device 2 also includes power receiving lines 29 which lead to conventional power distribution circuitry (not shown) for providing requisite power to each of the system components, when and for time prescribed by the system controller. As illustrated, power receiving lines 29 run alongside data communication lines 30 and are physically associated with multi-pin connector plug 31 at the end of flexible scanner cable 5. An on/off power switch or functionally equivalent device (not shown) may be provided external the hand-

supportable housing to permit the user to selectively energize and deenergize the device. In the illustrative embodiment, power delivered through flexible scanner cable 5 to the bar code symbol reading device is continuously provided to system controller 28 so as to continuously enable its operation, while only biasing voltages and the like are provided to all other system components. In this way, each system component must be activated (i.e. enabled) by the system controller in accordance with its preprogrammed system control routine.

In accordance with the present invention, the purpose of the object detection circuit is to determine whether an object (e.g., product, document, etc.) is present or absent from the object detection field over particular time intervals specified by the system controller. When an object is detected within the object detection field, the object detection circuit produces first control activation signal $A_1=1$, which like all control activation signals, is provided as input to system controller 28. As will be described in greater detail hereinafter, depending on the particular stage of the system control process, the system controller will respond to this event by causing the bar code reading device to undergo a transition from the object detection state to the bar code symbol (presence) detection state. In Figs. 5 and 6, two different techniques are disclosed for detecting the presence of an object within the object detection field.

In Fig. 5, an "active" object detection circuit 16A is shown. In essence, this circuit operates by transmitting a pulsed infrared (IR) light signal forwardly into the object detection field. First control activation signal A_1 is

generated upon receiving a reflection of the transmitted signal from an object residing within the object detection field. As illustrated, object detection circuit 16A is realized as an IR sensing circuit which comprises a

5 synchronous receiver/transmitter 33 and an infrared LED 34 which generates a 940 nanometer pulsed signal at a rate of 15.0 KHZ. This pulsed IR signal is transmitted through focusing lens 35 to illuminate the object detection field. When an object is present within the object detection field,

10 a reflected IR pulse signal is produced from the surface of the object, spatially filtered by aperture stop 65B and focused through focusing lens 36 onto photodiode 37. Notably, (i) selection of the optical characteristics of aperture stop 65B and lens 36 and (ii) the placement of

15 photodiode 37 (with integrally formed lens 36) behind aperture stop 65B directly determine the geometric characteristics of the object detection field. Consequently, these optical parameters are selected so as to provide an object detection field which, as hereinbefore

20 explained, spatially encompasses at least a portion of the scanning field along the operative scanning range of the device. As illustrated in Fig. 5, the output of photodiode 37 is converted to a voltage by current-to-voltage amplifier 38, and the output thereof is provided as input to

25 synchronous receiver/transmitter 33 which synchronously compares the received IR signal with the transmitted IR signal to determine whether an object is present in or absent from the object detection field. If the object is present in the object detection field, then synchronous

30 receiver/transmitter 33 produces first control activation signal $A_1=1$, indicative of this condition. Upon generation

of first control activation signal $A_1=1$, the system controller activates the operation of laser scanning mechanism 17, photoreceiving circuit 18, A/D conversion circuit 19, and bar code presence detection module 20 according to a preprogrammed system control routine, the details of which will be described hereinafter.

In Fig. 6, a "passive" object detection circuit 10B is shown. In essence this circuit operates by passively detecting ambient light within the object detection field. First control activation signal A_1 is generated upon receiving light of different intensity reflected off an object within the object detection field. As illustrated object detection circuit 16B is realized as a passive ambient light detection circuit which comprises a pair of photodiodes 39 and 40, that sense ambient light gathered from two spatially overlapping parts of the object detection field using focussing lenses 41 and 42, respectively. Notably, the optical characteristics of focusing lenses 41 and 42 and the placement of photodiodes 39 and 40 relative to lenses 41 and 42, will collectively determine the geometric characteristics of the object detection field. Consequently, these optical parameters will be selected to provide an object detection field which spatially encompasses at least a portion of the scanning field along the operative scanning range of the device. The output signals of photodiodes 39 and 40 are converted to voltages by current-to-voltage amplifiers 43 and 44 respectively, and are provided as input to a differential amplifier 45. The output of differential amplifier 45 is provided as input to a sample and hold amplifier 46 in order to reject 60 Hz and 120 Hz noise. Output signal of amplifier 46 is provided as

input to a logarithmic amplifier 47 to compand signal swing. The output signal of logarithmic amplifier 47 is provided as input to a differentiator 48 and then to a comparator 49. The output of comparator 49 provides first control
5 activation signal A_1 . When an object is present in the object detection field, the output of computer 49 provides control activation signal $A_1=1$.

Alternatively, the automatic bar code reading device of the present invention can be readily adapted to sense
10 ultrasonic energy reflected off an object present within the object detection field. In such an alternative embodiment, object detection circuit 16 is realized as an ultrasonic energy transmitting/receiving mechanism. In the head
15 portion of hand-supportable housing 9, ultrasonic energy is generated and transmitted forwardly of the housing head portion into the object detection field. Then, ultrasonic energy reflected off an object within the object detection field is detected closely adjacent the transmission window using an ultrasonic energy detector. Preferably, a focusing
20 element is disposed in front of the detector in order to effectively maximize the collection of reflected ultrasonic energy. In such instances, the focusing element essentially determines the geometrical characteristics of the object detection field of the device. Consequently, as with the
25 other above-described object detection circuits, the energy focusing (i.e. collecting) characteristics of the focusing element will be selected to provide an object detection field which spatially encompasses at least a portion of the scan field.

30 For purposes of illustration, object detection circuit 16 shown in Fig. 5, is provided with two different modes of

detection, namely, a long-range mode of object detection and a short-range mode of object detection. As shown in Fig. 4, these modes are set by the system controller using mode enable signals $E_{IRT}=0$ and $E_{IRT}=1$, respectively. When
 5 induced into the long-range mode of object detection, the IR sensing circuit will generate first control activation signal $A_1=1$ whenever an object has been detected within the operative range of the object detection field, independent of the particular distance at which the object resides from
 10 the transmissive window. When induced into the short-range mode of object detection, the IR sensing circuit will generate first activation control signal $A_1=1$ only when an object is detected at a distance within the short-range of the object detection field.

15 As schematically indicated in Figs. 3 and 3A, the long-range specification for object detection is preferably preselected to be the full or entire range of sensitivity provided by IR sensing circuit 16A (e.g. 0 to about 10 inches). Preferably, the short-range specification for
 20 object detection is preselected to be the reduced range of sensitivity provided by the IR sensing circuit when mode enable signal $E_{IRT}=1$ is provided to the desensitization port of synchronous receiver/transmitter 33. In the illustrated embodiment, the short-range of object detection is about 0
 25 to about 3 inches or so to provide CCD-like scanner emulation. As will become apparent hereinafter, the inherently limited depth and width of field associated with the short-range mode of object detection prevents laser scanning mechanism 17 from flooding the scan field with
 30 laser scanning light and thus inadvertently detecting undesired bar code symbols. Particular uses to which object

detection range selection can be put, will be described in greater detail hereinafter with reference to Figs. 11A through 16B in particular.

As illustrated in Fig. 4, laser scanning mechanism 17 comprises a light source 50 which, in general, may be any source of intense light suitably selected for maximizing the reflectivity from the object's surface bearing the bar code symbol. In the illustrative embodiment, light source 50 comprises a solid-state visible laser diode (VLD) which is driven by a conventional driver circuit 51. The wavelength of visible laser light produced from the laser diode is preferably about 670 nanometers. In order to repeatedly scan the produced laser beam over a scan field having a predetermined spatial extent in front of the head portion of the housing as illustrated in Figs. 3 and 3A, a planar scanning mirror 52 is oscillated back and forth by a stepper motor 53 driven by a conventional driver circuit 54. However, one of a variety of conventional laser scanning mechanisms may be alternatively used with excellent results.

To selectively activate laser light source 50 and scanning motor 53, the system controller provides laser diode enable signal E_L and scanning motor enable signal E_M as input to driver circuits 51 and 54, respectively. When enable signal E_L is a logical "high" level (i.e., $E_L=1$) a laser beam is generated and projected through the light transmissive window 10 and when E_M is a logical high level the laser beam is repeatedly scanned across the scan field.

When a bar code symbol on an object is within the scan field at the time of scanning, the incident laser light on the bar code will be scattered and reflected. This scattering/reflection process produces a laser light return

signal of variable intensity which represents a spatial variation of light reflectivity characteristic of the spaced apart pattern of bars comprising the bar code symbol. Photoreceiving circuit 18 detects at least a portion of the reflected laser light of variable intensity. Upon detection of this reflected laser light, photoreceiving circuit 18 produces an analog scan data signal D_1 indicative of the detected light intensity.

In the illustrative embodiment, photoreceiving circuit 18 generally comprises laser light collection optics 55, which focus reflected laser light for subsequent detection by a photoreceiver 56 having, mounted in front of its sensor, a frequency selective filter 57 which only transmits optical radiation of wavelengths up to a small band above 670 nanometers. Photoreceiver 56, in turn, produces an analog signal which is subsequently amplified by preamplifier 58 to produce analog scan data signal D_1 . In combination, laser scanning mechanism 17 and photoreceiving circuit 18 cooperate to generate analog scan data signals D_1 from the scan field, over time intervals specified by the system controller. As will be illustrated hereinafter, these scan data signals are used by bar code presence detection module 20, bar code scan range detection module 21, and symbol decoding module 22 to perform particular functions.

As illustrated in Fig. 4, analog scan data signal D_1 is provided as input to A/D conversion circuit 19. As is well known in the art, A/D conversion circuit 19 processes analog scan data signal D_1 to provide a digital scan data signal D_2 which resembles, in form, a pulse width modulated signal, where logical "1" signal levels represent spaces of the scanned bar code and logical "0" signal levels represent

bars of the scanned bar code. A/D conversion circuit 19 can be realized by any conventional A/D circuit well known to those with ordinary skill in the art. Digitized scan data signal D_2 is then provided as input to bar code presence detection module 20, bar code scan range detection module 21 and symbol decoding module 22.

The purpose and function of bar code presence detection module 20 is to determine whether a bar code is present in or absent from the scan field over particular time intervals specified by the system controller. When a bar code symbol is detected in the scan field, bar code presence detection module 20 generates second control activation signal A_2 (i.e., $A_2=1$) which is provided as input to the system controller, as shown in Fig. 4. Preferably, bar code presence detection module 20 is realized as a microcode program carried out by the microprocessor and associated program and buffer memory, described hereinbefore. The function of the bar code presence detection module is not to carry out a decoding process, but rather to rapidly determine whether the received scan data signals represent a bar code symbol residing within the scan field.

There are a number of ways in which to achieve bar code presence detection through a programming implementation. For example, in the preferred embodiment, bar code presence detection module 20 detects the first and second borders of the bar code symbol "envelope". This is achieved by first processing a digital scan data signal D_2 to produce digital "count" and "sign" data. The digital count data is representative of the measured time interval (i.e. duration) of each signal level occurring between detected signal level transitions which occur in digitized scan data signal D_2 .

The digital sign data, on the other hand, indicates whether the signal level between detected signal level transitions is either a logical "1", representative of a space, or a logical "0", representative of a bar within a bar code symbol. Using the digital count and sign data, the bar code presence detection module identifies the first and second borders of the bar code envelope, and thereby determines whether or not the envelope of a bar code symbol is represented by the scan data collected from the scan field.

When a bar code symbol envelope is detected, the bar code symbol presence detection module provides second control activation signal $A_2=1$ to the system controller. As will be described in greater detail hereinafter, second control activation signal $A_2=1$ causes the device to undergo a transition from bar code presence detection state to bar code symbol reading state.

Similar to the object detection circuit described above, the bar code presence detection module is provided with two different modes of detection, namely: a long-range mode of bar code presence detection and a short-range mode of bar code presence detection. As shown in Fig. 4, these long and short-range modes are set by the system controller using mode select enable signals $E_{sc0}=0$ and $E_{sc0}=1$, respectively. When induced into the long-range mode of detection, the bar code presence detection module will generate second control activation signal $A_2=1$ whenever the envelope of a bar code symbol has been detected, despite the particular distance the bar code is from the light transmissive window. However, when induced into the short-range mode of detection, the bar code presence detection module will generate second control activation signal $A_2=1$

only when the envelope of a bar code symbol has been detected and when the associated digital count (i.e. timing) data indicates that the detected bar code resides within the short-range portion of the scan field.

5 Similar to long-range specification for object detection, long-range specification for bar code presence detection is preselected to be the entire operative scanning range available to the device. In an illustrated embodiment, this range can be from about 0 to about 10
10 inches from the transmission aperture, depending on the optics employed in the laser scanning mechanism and the response characteristics of the photoreceiving circuit. These long and short-range specifications are schematically indicated in Figs. 3 and 3A. In the preferred embodiment,
15 short-range specification for bar code presence detection is preselected to be the same range selected for short-range object detection (e.g. approximately 0 to about 3 inches from the transmission aperture). As will become apparent hereinafter, the inherently limited depth and width of field
20 associated with the short-range mode of bar code symbol detection, prevents the reading of detected bar code symbols residing outside the short-range portion of the scan field.

 Unlike the bar code symbol presence detection module, the purpose and function of bar code scan range detection
25 module 21 is not to detect the presence of a bar code symbol in the scan field, but rather to determine the range (i.e. distance) at which a detected or decoded bar code symbol resides from the light transmissive window of the housing. As will be explained in greater detail hereinafter, this
30 data processing module operates upon digital scan data signal D₂ which has been previously utilized by either the

bar code symbol detection module, or the symbol decoding module depending on the state of the system.

When the system is induced into its short-range mode of bar code presence detection, bar code presence detection module 20 does not automatically produce and provide second control activation signal $A_2=1$ to the system controller upon the detection of a bar code symbol in the scan field. Rather, when a bar code symbol has been detected, the bar code presence detection module first provides to the system controller, a second control activation signal $A_{2s}=1$, indicative of a detected bar code in the scan field. Then, bar code scan range detection module 21 analyzes digital count data D_c , produced by the bar code presence detection module, to determine at what range the detected bar code symbol resides from the light transmissive window. If scan range detection module 21 determines that the detected bar code symbol is located within the prespecified short-range portion of the scan field, then it provides second control activation signal $A_{2b}=1$ to the system controller; otherwise, the scan range detection module produces second control activation signal $A_{2b}=0$. Only when both control activation signals $A_{2s}=1$ and $A_{2b}=1$ are received by the system controller in this mode, does $A_2=1$ and thus the bar code reading device caused to undergo a transition from bar code symbol presence detection state to bar code symbol reading state.

Returning to Fig. 4, the function of symbol decoding module 22 is to process, scan line by scan line, the stream of digitized scan data D_2 , in an attempt to decode a valid bar code symbol within a predetermined time period allowed by the system controller. In general, when symbol decoding module 22 successfully decodes a bar code symbol within the

predetermined time period, symbol character data D_3
(typically in ASCII code format) corresponding to the
decoded bar code symbol is produced. Thereupon, a third
control activation signal $A_3=1$ is produced by the symbol
5 decoding module and is provided to the system controller in
order to perform its system control functions.

Similar to the bar code presence detection module, the
symbol decoding module is provided with two different modes
of detection, namely: a long-range mode and a short-range
10 mode of bar code symbol decoding. When the system is
induced into its short-range mode of bar code symbol
decoding, symbol decoding module 22 does not automatically
generate third activation signal $A_3=1$ upon decoding a valid
bar code symbol. Rather, when a bar code symbol has been
15 successfully decoded, the symbol decoding unit first
provides to the system controller, a third activation
control signal $A_{3a}=1$, indicative of a decoded bar code
symbol in the scan field. Then, bar code scan range
detection module 21 analyzes digital count data D_{c2} produced
20 by the symbol decoding module, to determine at what range
(i.e. distance) the decoded bar code symbol resides from the
transmission aperture. If the bar code scan range detection
module determines that the decoded bar code symbol resides
within the prespecified short-range portion of the scan
25 field, then it provides third control activation signal
 $A_{3b}=1$ to the system controller; otherwise, bar code scan
range detection module produces third control activation
signal $A_{3b}=0$. Only when both control activation signals
 $A_{3a}=1$ and $A_{3b}=1$ are received by the system controller in this
30 mode, does $A_3=1$ and thus bar code reading device caused to

undergo a transition from the bar code symbol reading state to the symbol character data transmission/storage state.

The long-range and short-range modes of bar code symbol detection and decoding described above each require the use of bar code scan range detection to determine whether or not the detected or decoded bar code symbol resides in the short or long-range portion of the scan field. As such, the use of this scan data processing technique permits the system of the present invention to condition the occurrence of particular events within the system control program. This feature of the present invention will be illustrated in great detail hereinafter when describing auxiliary system control routine of Figs. 8A and 8B.

As will be illustrated in greater detail hereinafter with reference to Figs. 8 and 8A, the system controller provides enable signals E_{FC} , E_{OS} and E_{OT} to data format conversion module 23, data storage unit 24 and data transmission circuit 25, respectively, at particular stages of its control program. As illustrated in Fig. 4, symbol decoding module 22 provides symbol character data D_3 to data format module 23 to convert data D_3 into two differently formatted types of symbol character data, namely D_4 and D_5 . Format-converted symbol character data D_4 is of the "packed data" format, particularly adapted for efficient storage in data storage unit 24. Format-converted symbol character data D_5 is particularly adapted for data transmission to host computer system 6 (e.g. an electronic cash register). When symbol character data D_4 is to be converted into the format of the user's choice (based on a selected option mode), the system controller provides enable signal E_{OS} to data storage unit 24, as shown in Fig. 4. Similarly, when

format converted data D_5 is to be transmitted to host device
6, the system controller provides enable signal E_0 to data
transmission circuit 25. Thereupon, data transmission
circuit 24 transmits format-converted symbol character data
5 D_5 to host computer system 6, via the data transmission
lines of flexible scanner connector cable 5.

In order to select either the long or short-range mode
of object (and bar code range detection, the hand-
supportable bar code reading device is provided with both
10 manual and automated mechanisms for effectuating such range
selections.

For example, a manual switch 27 is mounted on the top
surface of the handle portion of the housing, so that long
and short-range modes of object and bar code range detection
15 can be selected by simply depressing this switch with ones
thumb while handling the bar code reading device. This
switch provides control activation signal $A_4=1$ to the system
controller, which in turn generates the appropriate mode
enable signal E_{INT} .

20 In the illustrated embodiment, magnetic field sensing
circuit 26 is operably associated with the system controller
to automatically generate control activation signal $A_4=1$
when the hand-supportable bar code reading device is not
supported within scanner support stand 3. As will be
25 described in greater detail hereinafter, scanner support
stand 3 includes a means for producing a magnetic field in
proximity with either one of the head or handle portion
support structures 12A and 12B. With this arrangement,
magnetic field sensing circuit 26 generates control
30 activation signal $A_4=1$ when the magnetic field is sensed
while the hand-supportable bar code reading device is

received within the scanner support stand. Additionally, a indicator light can be provided on the housing of the hand-supportable device to visually indicate the particular mode which has been manually or automatically selected.

5 In general, magnetic sensing circuit 26 comprises a magnetic flux detector 60, a preamplifier and a threshold detection circuit. Magnetic flux detector 60 produces as output an electrical signal representative of the intensity of detected magnetic flux density in its proximity. When
10 housing 9 is received and supported in scanner support stand 3, as shown, for example, in Figs. 1, 13, 15, and 17, magnetic flux detector 60 is in position to detect magnetic flux emanating from a magnetic bar fixedly mounted within the handle portion support structure of the scanner support
15 stand. The produced electrical signal from the magnetic flux detector is amplified by the preamplifier whose output is compared to a predetermined threshold maintained in the threshold detector circuit. If the intensity of the detected magnetic flux exceeds the threshold, long-range
20 control activation signal $A_4=1$ is provided to the system controller.

As illustrated in Fig. 2, magnetic flux detector 60 is mounted to the rearward underside surface of the handle portion of housing 9. In the illustrated embodiment, a
25 ferrous bar 61 is interiorly mounted to the underside surface of the housing handle portion as shown. As will be described in greater detail hereinafter, this arrangement facilitates releasable magnetic attachment of the hand-supportable housing to the magnetic bar fixedly installed in
30 the handle portion support structure of the scanner support stand. Preferably, a hole 61A is drilled through ferrous

bar 61 to permit installation of magnetic flux detector 60 so that magnetic flux emanating from the handle portion support structure is detectable when the hand-supportable housing is placed within the scanner support stand, as shown in Figs. 1, 13, 15, and 17. In this configuration, magnetic flux detector 60 is in proximity with the source of magnetic flux (i.e. magnetic bar in the scanner support stand) and thus long-range control activation signal $A_L=1$ is provided to the system controller. In response, the system controller enables long-range object detection (i.e. $E_{LR}=0$). When the hand-supportable housing is removed from the scanner support stand as shown in Figs. 2, 11C, 14B and 16B, the intensity of the magnetic flux from the scanner support stand is no longer sufficient in strength to produce long-range mode activation signal $A_L=1$; instead, short-range control activation signal $A_L=0$ is provided to the system controller. In response, the system controller enables short-range object detection (i.e. $E_{LR}=1$), and the automatic hand-supportable bar code reading device emulates the operational range of a CCD scanner.

As illustrated in Fig. 2A, a thin ferrous plate 62 is exteriorly applied to the underside of the head portion of the hand-supportable housing. As will be described in greater detail hereinafter, the function of ferrous elements 61 and 62 is to provide a means by which the plastic hand-supportable housing can be magnetically attracted by magnetic elements installed within head and handle portion support structures 12B and 12C when the bar code reading device is placed in the scanner support stand.

It is understood that there are a variety of ways in which to configure the above described system components

within the hand-supportable housing of the automatic bar code reading device, while successfully carrying out of functions of the present invention. In Figs. 2A through 2D, one preferred arrangement is illustrated.

5 In Fig. 2A, the optical arrangement of the system components is shown. Specifically, visible laser diode 50 is mounted in the rear corner of circuit board 63 installed within the head portion of the housing. Stationary concave mirror 55 is mounted centrally at the front end of circuit board 63, primarily for the purpose of collecting laser light reflected off detected objects. Notably, the height of concave mirror 55 is such as not to block transmission aperture 13. Mounted off center onto the surface of concave mirror 55, is a very small second mirror 64 for directing the laser beam to planar mirror 52 which is connected to the motor shaft of scanning motor 53, for joint oscillatory movement therewith. As shown, scanning motor 53 is mounted centrally at the rear end of circuit board 63. In the opposite rear corner of circuit board 63, photodetector 56 and frequency selective filter 57 are mounted.

10 In operation, laser diode 50 adjacent the rear of the head portion, produces a laser beam which is directed in a forward direction to the small stationary mirror 64 and is then reflected back to oscillating mirror 52. Oscillating mirror 52 directs the laser beam through transmission aperture 13 and light transmissive window 10, while repeatedly scanning the laser beam across the scan field. Under the control of the user, the visible laser beam is aligned with a bar code symbol on the detected object, so that the laser beam scans the bar and space pattern thereof.

25 A portion of the scattered laser light reflected from the

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bar code symbol is directed back through the light transmissive window and towards oscillating mirror 52, which also acts as a light retroreflective mirror. Oscillating mirror 52 then directs the reflected laser light to stationary concave collecting mirror 55 at the forward end of the head portion of the hand-supportable housing. The laser light collected from the concave mirror 55 is then directed to photodetector 56 to produce an electrical signal representative of the detected intensity of the laser light reflected off the bar code symbol.

As illustrated in Fig. 2C, IR LED 34 and photodiode 37 are mounted to circuit board 63, in front of stationary concave mirror 55 and in a slightly offset manner from longitudinal axis 15 of the head portion of the housing. Apertures 65A and 65B are formed in opaque housing panel 14B, below transmission aperture 13, to permit transmission and reception of pulsed IR energy signals, as hereinbefore described. In order to shield IR radiation from impinging on photodiode 37 via the housing, a metallic optical tube 66 having an aperture 67 encases photodiode 37. The dimensions of aperture 67, the placement of IR LED 34 and its radiation transmission characteristics collectively will determine the radiation pattern of the transmitted IR signal from aperture 65A in the housing. In order to collect pulsed IR radiation from the object detection field of designed geometry, photodiode 37 is located at a selected distance behind aperture stop 65B formed in opaque housing panel 14B, as shown in Fig. 2D. By selecting the dimensions of aperture stop 65B and the placement of photodiode 37 (and integrally formed lens 36) behind aperture stop 65B, the

desired geometrical characteristics and the object detection field can be directly determined, as described hereinbefore.

In order to prevent optical radiation slightly below 670 nanometers from passing through transmission aperture 13 and entering the housing, light transmissive window 10 is realized as a plastic filter lens 10 is installed over the transmission aperture. This plastic filter lens has optical characteristics which transmit only optical radiation from slightly below 670 nanometers. In this way, the combination of plastic filter lens 10 at the transmission aperture and frequency selective filter 57 before photoreceiver 56 cooperate to form a narrow band-pass optical filter having a center frequency $f_c = 670$ nanometers. By permitting only optical radiation associated with the visible laser beam to enter the housing, this optical arrangement provides improved signal-to-noise ratio for detected scan data signals D_1 .

In addition to the above-described optical and electro-optical components, circuit board 63 carries all other electronic components and associated circuitry used in realizing IR object detection circuit 16A, scanning mechanism 17, photoreceiving circuit 18, and A/D conversion 19. With respect to the other system components, a second circuit board 69 is mounted within the handle portion of the housing, as shown in Figs. 2A and 2B. The function of circuit board 69 is to carry electronic components and associated circuitry used in realizing bar code presence detection module 20, bar code scan range detection module 21, symbol decoding module 22, data format conversion module 23, data storage unit 24, data transmission circuit 25, magnetic field detection circuit 26, manual range/mode

selection switch 27, and system controller 28. All
conductors associated with flexible multiwire scanner cable
5 are electrically connected to circuit board 69 in a manner
well known in the art. Electrical communication between
circuit boards 63 and 69 is realized using a plurality of
electrical wires jumping across these circuit boards.

Having described the detailed structure and internal
functions of the automatic bar code reading device of the
illustrative embodiment, the operation of its system
controller will now be described with reference to system
block diagram shown in Fig. 4, and to Blocks A to CC shown
in Figs. 7A and 7B.

Beginning at the START block of Main System Control
Routine of Fig. 7A and proceeding to Block A, bar code
reading device 2 is initialized. This involves activating
(i.e. enabling) IR sensing circuit 16A and the system
controller. The system controller, on the other hand,
deactivates (i.e. disables) the remainder of activatable
system components, e.g. laser diode 50, scanning motor 53,
photoreceiving circuit 18, A/D conversion circuit 19, bar
code presence detection module 20, bar code scan data range
detection module 21, symbol decoding module 22, data format
conversion module 23, data storage unit 24, and data
transmission circuit 25. All timers T_1 , T_2 , T_3 , T_4 and T_5
(not shown) maintained by the system controller are reset to
 $t = 0$ seconds.

Proceeding to Block B, the system controller checks to
determine whether control activation signal $A_1 = 1$ is
received from IR sensing circuit 16A. If this signal is not
received, then the system controller returns to the START
block. If signal $A_1 = 1$ is received, indicative that an

object has been detected within the object detection field,
then the system controller proceeds to Block C, at which
timer T_1 is started and is permitted to run for a preset
time period, e.g. $0 \leq T_1 \leq 3$ seconds, and timer T_2 is
5 started and permitted to run for a preset time period $0 \leq T_2$
 ≤ 5 seconds.

Proceeding to Block D, the system controller activates
laser diode 50, scanning motor 53, photoreceiving circuit
18, A/D conversion circuit 19 and bar code presence
10 detection module 20 in order to collect and analyze scan
data signals D_2 for the purpose of determining whether or
not a bar code is within the scan field. Then, at Block E,
the system controller checks to determine whether control
activation signal $A_2 = 1$ is received from bar code presence
15 detection module 20 within time period $1 \leq T_1 \leq 3$ seconds.
If activation control signal $A_2 = 1$, is not received within
this period, then the system controller proceeds to Block F.
At Block F, the system controller deactivates laser diode
50, scanning motor 53, photoreceiving circuit 18, A/D
20 conversion circuit 19 and bar code presence detection module
20. Then the system controller remains at Block G until it
receives control activation signal $A_1 = 0$ from IR sensing
circuit 16A, indicative that the object is no longer in the
object detection field. When this condition exists, the
25 system controller returns to the START block.

If, however, the system controller receives control
activation signal $A_2 = 1$ within time period $0 \leq T_1 \leq 3$
seconds, indicative that a bar code has been detected, then
the system controller proceeds to Block H. As will be
30 described hereinafter, this represents a transition from the
bar code presence detection state to the bar code symbol

reading state. Proceeding to Block H, the system controller continues activation of laser diode 40, scanning motor 53, photoreceiving circuit 18, and A/D conversion circuit 19, while commencing activation of symbol decoding module 20. At this stage, fresh bar code scan data is collected and subjected to decode data processing. At essentially the same time, at Block I, the system controller starts timer T_3 to run for a time period $0 \leq T_3 \leq 1$ second.

As indicated at Block J, the system controller checks to determine whether control activation signal $A_3 = 1$ is received from the symbol decoding module 22 within $T_3 = 1$ second, indicative that a bar code symbol has been successfully read (i.e. scanned and decoded) within the allotted time period. If control activation signal A_3 is not received within the time period $T_3 = 1$ second, then at Block K the system controller checks to determine whether control activating signal $A_2 = 1$ is received within time period $0 \leq T_3 \leq 3$ seconds. If a bar code symbol is not detected within this time period, then the system controller proceeds to Block L to deactivate laser diode 50, scanning motor 53, photoreceiving circuit 18, A/D conversion circuit 19, bar code presence detection module 20 and symbol decoding module 22. Notably, this event causes a state transition from the bar code reading state to the object detection state. Thereafter, at Block M the system controller remains in the object detection state awaiting control activation signal $A_1 = 0$, indicative that an object is no longer in the object detection field. When this condition exists, the system controller returns to the START block, as shown.

If at Block K, however, the system controller receives control activation signal $A_2 = 1$, indicative that a bar code once again is within the scan field, then the system controller checks to determine whether time period T_2 has elapsed. If it has, then the system controller proceeds to Block L and then to the START block by way of Block M. If however time period $0 \leq T_2 \leq 5$ seconds has not elapsed, then the system controller resets timer T_3 to run once again for a time period $0 \leq T_3 \leq 1$ second. In essence, this provides the device at least another opportunity to read a bar code present within the scan field when the system controller is at control Block J.

Upon receiving control activation signal $A_3 = 1$ from symbol decoding module 29, indicative that a bar code symbol has been successfully read, the system controller proceeds to Block O. At this stage of the system control process, the system controller continues to activate laser diode 50, scanning motor 53, photoreceiving circuit 18 and A/D conversion circuit 19, while deactivating symbol decoding module 22 and commencing activation of data format conversion module 23, data storage unit 24 and data transmission circuit 25. These operations ensure repeated scanning of the laser beam across the scan field, while symbol character data is being appropriately formatted and transmitted to host computer system 6 by a conventional data communication process well known in the art.

After transmission of symbol character data to the host device is completed, the system controller enters Block P, and continues activation of laser diode 50, scanning motor 53, photoreceiving circuit 18 and A/D conversion circuit 19, while deactivating symbol decoding module 22, data format-

conversion module 23, data storage unit 24 and data transmission circuit 25. To detect the continued presence of an object within the object detection field, the system controller checks at Block Q whether control activation
5 signal $A_1 = 1$ is received from IR sensing circuit 16A. If $A_1 = 0$, indicative that the object is no longer in the object detection field, then the system controller returns to the START block. If control activation signal $A_1 = 1$ is received, then at Block R the system controller activates
10 bar code presence detection module 20. These events represent once again a transition from the object detection state to the bar code symbol presence detection state.

At Block S, the system controller starts timer T_4 to run for a time period $0 \leq T_4 \leq 5$ seconds, and timer T_5 to
15 run for a time period $0 \leq T_5 \leq 3$ seconds. Then to determine whether a bar code symbol has been detected within the scan field, system controller proceeds to Block T to check whether control activation signal $A_2 = 1$ is received. If this signal is not received with the time period $0 \leq T_5 \leq 3$
20 seconds, indicative that no bar code symbol is present in the scan field, the system controller proceeds to Block U, at which it deactivates laser diode 50, scanning motor 53, photoreceiving circuit 18, A/D conversion circuit 19 and bar code presence detection module 20. Thereafter, the system
25 controller remains at Block V until the object leaves the object detection field and (i.e. receives control activation signal $A_1=0$), at which time the system controller returns to the START block, as shown.

If, however, at Block T control activation signal $A_2 =$
30 1 is received, indicative that a bar code symbol has been detected in the scan field, the system controller proceeds

through Blocks W and X to reactivate the symbol decoding module and start timer T_6 to run for a time period $0 \leq T_6 \leq 1$ second. These events represent a transition from the bar code symbol detection state to the bar code symbol reading state. At Block Y, the system controller checks to determine whether control activation signal $A_3 = 1$ is received from signal decoding module 22 within time period $0 \leq T_6 \leq 1$ second. If a bar code symbol is not successfully read within this 1 second time period, the system controller returns to Block T to form a first loop, within which the device is permitted to detect or redetect a bar code symbol within the time period $0 \leq T_4 \leq 5$ seconds. If a bar code symbol is decoded within this time interval, the system controller determines at Block Z whether the decoded bar code symbol is different from the previously decoded bar code symbol. If it is different, then the system controller returns to Block O as illustrated, to format and transmit symbol character data as described hereinabove.

If, however, the decoded bar code symbol is not different than the previously decoded bar code symbol, then at Block AA the system controller checks to determine whether timer T_4 has lapsed. If it has not lapsed, the system controller returns to Block T to form a second loop, within which the device is permitted to detect or redetect a bar code symbol in the scan field and then successfully read a valid bar code symbol within the set time interval $0 \leq T_4 \leq 5$ seconds. If, however, timer T_4 lapses, then the system controller proceeds to Block BB at which the system controller deactivates laser diode 50, scanning motor 53, photoreceiving circuit 18, A/D conversion circuit 19, bar code presence detection module 20, and symbol decoding

module 22. Thereafter, the system controller remains at Block CC until control activation signal $A=0$ is received from IR sensing circuit 16A, indicative that the object detection field is free of any objects. At this stage, the system controller returns to the START block, as shown in Fig. 7B.

The operation of automatic hand-supportable bar code reading device 2 has been described in connection with The Main System Control Routine which uses control activation signals A_1 , A_2 and A_3 . This system control routine operates on two basic assumptions concerning IR sensing circuit 16A and bar code symbol presence detection module 20. Specifically, The Main System Control Routine assumes that the IR sensing circuit produces control activation signal $A_1 = 1$ whenever an object is detected anywhere within the operative detection range of the object detection field. It also assumes that the bar code symbol presence detection module produces control activation signal $A_2 = 1$ whenever a bar code symbol is detected anywhere within the operative scanning range of the scan field. These assumptions cause state transitions during the operation of the automatic bar code symbol reading device, when otherwise they may not be desired in particular applications.

For example, in some applications it may not be desirable to automatically advance the bar code symbol reading device to its bar code presence detection state until an object bearing a bar code is within the short-range portion of the object detection field, as hereinbefore described. Also, it may not be desirable to automatically advance to the bar code symbol reading state until a detected bar code symbol is located within the short-range

portion of the scan field. Also, it may not be desirable to automatically advance to the symbol character data storage/transmission state until a decoded bar code symbol is located within the short-range portion of the scan field. Thus, in some instances, it may be desirable to condition transition from (i) object detection to the bar code symbol detection state, (ii) the bar code symbol detection state to the bar code symbol reading state, and (iii) the bar code symbol reading state to the symbol character data storage/transmission state. Yet, in other instances, it may only be desirable to condition only one or two of these state transitions.

Figs. 8A and 8B illustrate The Auxiliary System Control Routine with Range Selection which provides the automatic bar code reading device of the present invention with range selection capabilities for object detection, bar code presence detection, and bar code symbol reading. These range selection functions are provided when the system controller runs the Auxiliary System Control Routine of in cooperation with the Main System Control Routine described above. It is understood, however, that this Auxiliary System Control Routine may be adapted for use with other suitable system control programs.

Beginning at the START block and proceeding to Block A' of Fig. 8A, the system controller initially selects the long-range object detection mode by letting the IR sensing circuit operate at full sensitivity (i.e. $E_{IR} = 0$). To determine whether the short-range mode of object detection, bar code symbol presence detection and bar code symbol reading has been selected, the system controller proceeds to Block B' and checks whether it has received control

activation signal $A_4 = 1$. As described hereinbefore in connection with Fig. 4, activation signal $A_4 = 1$ can be generated in at least two possible ways. For example, the short-range mode may be manually selected by depressing switch 27 on the handle portion of the housing. Alternatively, the short-range mode may be selected by simply lifting the bar code reading device out from the scanner support stand, as illustrated in Figs. 2, 11C, 14B, and 16B. In either case, prior to operating the bar code reading device, it is preferred that either the manual or automatic range mode selection mechanism be programmably set within the system controller by way of bar code menu programming, a technique well known in the art. For purposes of illustration only, the Auxilliary System Control Routine of Figs. 8A and 8B will be described using the automatic range mode selection mechanism provided by magnetic sensing circuit 26.

If control activation signal $A_4=1$ is received at Block B', then the system controller selects short-range object detection by desensitizing the IR sensing circuit. This is achieved by providing mode selection enable signal $E_{IR}=1$ as hereinbefore described. Then proceeding to Block D', the system controller enters the START block of Main System Control Routine of Figs. 7A and 7B. Thereafter, the control flow proceeds as prescribed by the Main System Control Routine. Notably, whenever the control flow in the Main System Control Routine returns to the START block of Fig. 7A, the system controller exits Main System Control Routine and returns to the START block of Fig. 8A.

As illustrated at Block E' of Fig. 8A, whenever the control flow is at Blocks D, I or R in the Main System

Control Routine, the system controller activates bar code presence detection 20 module and bar code scan range detection module 21. Thereafter, while at any one of these control blocks, the bar code scan range detection module processes scan data signals D_2 so as to produce digital count and sign data as hereinbefore described. As indicated at Block F', an additional condition is placed on control Blocks E, K and T in the Main System Control Routine so that a transition from the bar code presence detection state to the bar code symbol reading state occurs only if (i) the object is detected in the short-range portion of the object detection field, and (ii) the bar code symbol is detected in the short-range portion of the scan field. In terms of data processing, when the system control flow is at any one of such blocks in the Main System Control Routine and the system controller receives control activation signal $A_2=1$, then the system controller also determines whether the digital count data of the detected bar code resides within the short-range count interval.

If the produced digital count data D_{c1} indicates that the detected bar code symbol is located within the short-range portion of the scan field, then as indicated at Block G' of Fig. 8A, the system controller continues activation of the laser diode 50, scanning motor 53, photoreceiving circuit 18 and A/D conversion circuit 19, while commencing activation of symbol decoding circuit 22. As indicated at Block H', whenever the control flow is at either Block J or Block Y in the Main System Control Routine and the system controller receives third control activation signal $A_3=1$, then the system controller determines whether the digital count data D_{c1} from the decoded bar code symbol resides

within the short-range count interval (i.e. $A_{3b}=1$ is produced from scan range detection module 21). If digital count data D_{c2} resides within the short-range portion of the scan field, (i.e. $A_{3b}=1$) then as indicated at Block I', the system controller proceeds to Blocks O or Z, respectively, in the Main System Control Routine. If digital count data D_{c2} is not within the short-range portion of the scan field (i.e. $A_{3b}=0$), then as indicated at Block J, the system controller proceeds to Blocks K or J, respectively, in the Main System Control Routine.

If, however, digital count data D_{c1} produced at Block F indicates that the detected bar code symbol is not located within the short-range portion of the scan field (i.e. $A_{2b}=0$), then as indicated at Block K' of Fig. 8A, the system controller proceeds to Blocks F, L or U, respectively, in the Main System Control Routine.

Turning attention to Block B' of Fig. 8A, the system controller may not receive control activation signal $A_4=1$ from range selection circuits 26 or 27, as indicated at this block. Instead, short and long-range mode capabilities can be automatically selected by reading bar code symbols. This can be achieved by programming symbol decoding module 22 to recognize predesignated bar code symbols which automatically activate and deactivate long-range and short-range modes of object detection, bar code presence detection, and/or bar code symbol reading. This mechanism for automatic range selection is highly advantageous in many applications, such as, for example, reading bar code menus, CCD scanner emulation and the like.

As indicated at Block B' in Fig. 8A, when control activation signal $A_4 = 1$, the system controller activates

the long-range mode of object detection by letting IR sensing circuit 16A operate at full sensitivity (i.e. $E_{IR} = 0$), as indicated at Block L'. Then at Block M', the system controller enters the START block of Main System Control Routine of Figs. 7A and 7B. As indicated at Block N', before entering Block O of the Main System Control Routine, the system controller determines whether the successfully read bar code symbol is a bar code symbol which has been predesignated to activate the short-range mode of object detection, bar code presence detection and/or bar code symbol reading. This condition is determined by the system controller checking whether control activation signal $A_5=1$ is received from the symbol decoding module as shown in Fig. 4. If control activation signal $A_5=0$ is received by the system controller, then as indicated at Block O', the system controller proceeds to Block O of the Main System Control Routine. If, however, control activation signal $A_5=1$ is received, then as indicated at Block P', the system controller activates the short-range mode of object detection by desensitizing IR sensing circuit 16A (i.e. $E_{IR}=0$). This operation ensures that control activation signal A_1 is produced only when an object is detected within the short-range portion of the object detection field. As indicated at Block Q' of Fig. 8A, whenever the system controller is at Block D, I or R in the Main System Control Routine. The System Controller activates bar code presence detection module 20 and bar code scan range detection module 21.

As indicated at Block R', an additional condition is placed on control Blocks E, K and T in the Main System Control Routine. Specifically, a transition from the bar

code presence detection state to the bar code symbol reading state occurs only if the detected bar code symbol resides in the short-range portion of the scan field. This condition is satisfied by the scan range detection module determining whether or not the digital count data of the detected bar code symbol falls within a prespecified short-range count interval. If this digital count data does not fall within the short-range count interval, then as indicated at Block R', the system controller proceeds to control Blocks F, L or U, respectfully, in the Main System Control Routine, as indicated at Block K'. If, however, the digital count data is within the prespecified short-range count interval, then control activation signal $A_{28}=1$ is provided to the system controller as illustrated in Fig. 4. In this instance, both control activation signals $A_{2A}=1$ and $A_{28}=1$ are provided to the system controller so as to effectuate a transition to the bar code symbol reading state. This event is represented at Block S' of Fig. 8B by the system controller continuing the activation of laser diode 50, scanning motor 53, photoreceiving circuit 18, A/D conversion circuit 19 and bar code scan range detection module 20, while deactivating bar code symbol detection module 21 and activating symbol decoding module 22.

As indicated at Block T' of Fig. 8B, when the control flow is at Blocks J or Y in the Main System Control Routine and the system controller receives control activation signal $A_{3A}=1$, then the system controller determines whether the digital count data of the decoded bar code symbol is within the short-range count interval. If the bar code scan range detection module determines that decoded bar code symbol resides within the prespecified short-range portion of the

scan field, then it provides third control activation signal $A_{38}=1$ to the system controller, causing the bar code reading device to undergo a transition to the symbol character data transmission/storage state. In this case, as indicated at Block U', before entering Block O in the Main System Control Routine, the symbol decoding module determines whether the decoded bar code symbol is a short-range mode deactivation symbol. If the decoded bar code is such a symbol, then as indicated at Block V', the system controller activates the long-range mode by letting IR sensing circuit 16A operate at full sensitivity (i.e. $E_{IR}=0$), while deactivating bar code scan range detection module 21. Thereafter, the system proceeds to Blocks O or Z, respectively, in the Main System Control Routine. If, however, the decoded bar code symbol is not a short-range mode deactivation symbol, then as indicated at Block U', the system proceeds directly to Blocks O or Z, respectively, in the Main System Control Routine.

If, however, as indicated at Block T' the decoded bar code symbol does not reside within the short-range portion of the scan field, the system proceeds to Block X'. At this stage of the system control process, the symbol decoding module determines whether the decoded code symbol is a short-range mode deactivation symbol. If the decoded bar code symbol is such a symbol, then as indicated at Block Y', the system controller activates the long-range mode by letting IR sensing circuit 16A operate at full sensitivity, while deactivating bar code scan range detection module. Thereafter, the system proceeds to Blocks K or T, respectively, in the Main System Control Routine. If, however, the decoded symbol is not a short-range mode

deactivation symbol, then as indicated at Block Y', the system controller activates the long-range mode by letting the IR sensing circuit 16A to operate at full sensitivity, while deactivating bar code scan range detection module 21. Thereafter, the system proceeds to Blocks K or T, respectively, in the Main System Control Routine. If, however, the decoded bar code symbol is not a short-range mode deactivation symbol, then the system directly proceeds to Blocks K or T, respectively in the Main System Control Routine.

Having described the operation of the illustrative embodiment of the automatic hand-supportable bar code reading device of the present invention, it will be helpful to describe at this juncture the various conditions which cause state transitions to occur during its operation. In this regard, reference is made to Fig. 9 which provides a state transition diagram for the illustrative embodiment.

As illustrated in Fig. 9, the automatic hand-supportable bar code reading device of the present invention has four basic states of operation namely: object detection, bar code symbol presence detection, bar code symbol reading, and symbol character data transmission/storage. The nature of each of these states has been described above in great detail. These four states are schematically illustrated as A, B, C and D, respectively, in the state transition diagram of Fig. 9. Notably, two "extensional states" have also been provided so that the automatic bar code reading device of the illustrative embodiment is capable of reading an infinite number of consecutively different bar code symbols on a particularly detected object (e.g. a product or apparently continuous

surface) without returning to the object detection state. These extensional states of operation are indicated as E and F and represent bar code presence detection and bar code symbol reading operations, respectively. As described above, these operations are employed when attempting to automatically read one or more consecutively different bar codes symbols, that is, after a first bar code symbol has been successfully read utilizing operational states A through C.

As shown in Fig. 9, transitions between the various states are indicated by directional arrows. Besides each set of directional arrows are transition conditions expressed in terms of control activation signals (e.g. A₁, A₂ and A₃), and where appropriate, state time intervals (e.g. T₁, T₂, T₃, T₄, T₅ and T₆). Conveniently, the state diagram of Fig. 9 expresses most simply the four basic and two extensional operations occurring during the control flow within the system control program of Figs. 7A and 7B. Significantly, the control activation signals A₁, A₂ and A₃ in Fig. 9 indicate which events within the object detection and/or scan fields can operate to effect a state transition within the allotted time frame(s), where prescribed.

Referring now to Figs. 10 through 10B, the scanner support stand of the present invention will be described.

As illustrated in Figs. 10 through 10B, scanner stand 3 of the illustrative embodiment comprises support frame 12 releasably connected to a base support/mounting plate 70 by way of a snap fit fastening mechanism illustrated in Fig. 13C. In the illustrative embodiment, support frame 12 is formed as an injection molded shell, in which handle portion support structure 12B is realized by a first support recess

71; whereas head portion support structure 12C is realized by a second support recess 72. As shown in Fig. 10, first support recess 71 is disposed above base portion 12A and inclined at a first acute angle B_1 with respect thereto, while second support recess 72 is disposed above base portion 12B and inclined at a second acute angle B_2 with respect thereto.

As best shown in Fig. 10, first support recess 72 is formed by a first substantially planar support surface 73 surrounded by the projection of opposing side walls 74A and 74B and rear wall 74C, extending above planar support surface 73 in a perpendicular fashion. The function of support recess 71 is to receive and support the handle portion of hand-supportable bar code reading device. Similarly, second support recess 72 is formed by a second substantially planar support surface 75 surrounded by the projection of opposing side walls 76A and 76B and front wall surface 76C extending above planar support surface 75 in a perpendicular fashion. The function of support recess 72 is to receive and support the head portion of hand-supportable bar code reading device 2. In order that the handle portion of hand-supportable bar code reading device 2 can be received within support recess 71, rear wall 74C has a scanner cable aperture 77 which permits flexible scanner cable 5 to extend freely out beyond support recess 71. Also, front wall projection 76C is slightly lower than side wall projection 76A and 76B to ensure that pulsed IR energy is freely transmitted from and received by object detection circuit 16A contained within head portion 9A. At the same time, this structural feature of the scanner support stand ensures that visible laser light is projected, scanned and

collected through light transmissive window 10 without obstruction, i.e. when the automatic bar code reading device is operated in its automatic hands-free mode, shown in Figs. 15 and 17.

5 In order to ensure that the hand-supportable bar code reading device of the present invention will be securely, yet releasably supported within support recesses 71 and 72 and not easily knocked out of the scanner support stand during the hands-free mode of operation, first and second
10 magnetic elements 77 and 78 are permanently mounted to the underside of planar support surfaces 73 and 75, respectively, as illustrated in Fig. 10B. With this arrangement, magnetic flux of constant intensity continuously emanates from support recesses 71 and 72. As a
15 result, when the handle and head portions of the bar code reading device are placed within support recesses 71 and 72, ferrous element 61 in handle portion 9A is magnetically attracted to magnetic element 77, while ferrous element 62 on head portion 9B is magnetically attracted to magnetic
20 element 78. The magnetic force of attraction between these elements is selected so that a desired degree of force is required to lift the automatic bar code reading device out of scanner support stand, while preventing accidental displacement of the device from the scanner support stand
25 during use in the hands-free mode of operation.

As illustrated in Fig. 10A, base support/mounting plate 70 is formed as a thin planar structure having perimetrical dimensions substantially equal to the perimetrical dimensions of the base portion of support frame 12. At the
30 front and rear end portions 70A and 70B of base plate 70, a pair of projections 79 and 80 extend perpendicularly, as

shown. Projections 79 and 80 have horizontal flanges 79A and 80A, respectively, which are adapted to snap fit into horizontal grooves 81 and 82, formed on the interior surfaces of front and rear walls 76C and 74C, as shown in Figs. 10A, 10B and 13C.

To facilitate mounting of base plate 70 on a planar mounting surface, as illustrated in Figs. 12A and 12B, a pair of spaced apart mounting holes 83A and 83B are provided. To facilitate attachment of base plate 70 to pivotal joint assembly 97 of pedestal base 98, as illustrated in Figs. 18A through 18C, a set of four centrally disposed mounting holes 84A, 84B, 84C and 84D are provided. To facilitate support of base plate 70 upon a horizontal support surface, as illustrated in Figs. 11A through 11D, a set of four rubber feet 85A, 85B, 85C and 85D may be adhesively applied to the underside corners of the base plate 70.

In order to eliminate the confusion produced by various cables used to connect automatic bar code scanning device 2 to its external power supply (not shown) and associated host computer system 6, an adapter module 86 is concealed within the interior volume 87 contained between the interior surface of base portion 12A of the support frame and the upper surface of base plate 70. In the illustrated embodiment, adapter module 86 is adhesively affixed to the central portion of the upper surface of base plate 70, as illustrated in Fig. 10A. Scanner connector 31 of flexible scanner cable 5 is plugged into scanner jack 86A of the adapter module, and the communication cable connector of flexible communication cable 7 is plugged into communication jack 86B. Similarly, the power supply connector from the DC

power supply cable 8 is plugged into power supply jack 86C, as shown. With these interconnections established, support frame 12 is snapped onto base plate 70, as hereinbefore described, flexible scanner cable 5 is routed through aperture 87, and flexible communication and power supply cables 7 and 8 are routed through aperture 88 formed in the lower portion of rear wall 74C of the support frame, as shown in Fig. 10B.

In the illustrative embodiment, automatic bar code reading device 2 requires one regulated DC supply voltage to power the visible laser diode and other electronic and optoelectronic components mounted on circuit boards 63 and 69. However, in many applications, a 12V DC supply voltage is available at the point-of-sale station. Thus, in order to convert the 12V DC supply voltage to a 5V DC supply voltage, a DC-to-DC voltage converter is incorporated into adapter module 86. In this way, in addition to providing interconnections between the communication lines of the flexible scanner and communication cables, adapter module 86 also provides a means for converting the voltage level of the flexible power supply cable to one or more required voltages to be utilized in the bar code reading device.

The automatic bar code reading device of the present invention has been described in great detail. Thus, it is appropriate at this juncture to illustrate the automatic hands-on and hands-free modes of operation of the system while utilized in different mounting installations.

In Figs. 11A through 11D, a point-of-sale station is shown comprising an electronic cash register 6 operably connected to the automatic bar code reading system of the present invention by way of flexible communication cable 7.

Low voltage DC power is provided to the system by way of flexible power supply cable 8. In this particular mounting installation, scanner support stand 3 includes rubber feet 85A through 85D and is supported on a horizontal countertop surface 90. If necessary or desired in such mounting installations, base plate 70 may be weighted by affixing one or more dense mass elements to the upper surface of the base plate.

With automatic bar code reading device 2 supported within scanner support stand 3 as shown in Fig. 11A, the system is automatically induced into its automatic long-range hands-free mode of operation. However, owing to the positioning of both object detection and scan fields in this mounting installation, only bar code symbols located on small, very low profile objects can be easily read. In order to induce the system into its short-range hands-on mode of operation, the user simply encircles the handle portion of the hand-supportable device with his or her fingers, and then lifts the device out of the scanner support stand, as shown in Figs. 11B. With the automatic bar code reading device held in the user's hand, and a bar coded object 91 in the other hand, the object is moved into the short-range portion of the object detection field as shown in Fig. 11C, where the object is automatically detected and bar code symbol 92 automatically scanned by the visible laser beam repeatedly scanned across the scan field. After the bar code symbol has been successfully read and an audible and/or visible indication thereof produced by successful read indicator 120, the bar code reading device is placed back within the scanner support stand, as shown in

Fig. 11A, where it is once again induced into its long-range hands-free mode of operation.

In Figs. 12A and 12B, the scanner support stand of the present invention is shown being installed on a vertical counter wall surface of a point-of-sale station having an electronic cash register 6. As shown in Figs. 12A and 13B, to install the scanner support stand, a pair of spaced apart mounting screws 94A and 94B are partially screwed into vertical counter wall surface 93 so that base plate 70 will be vertically arranged slightly below horizontal countertop surface 95. Then, mounting holes 83A and 83B and screws 94A and 94B are passed through base plate 70, and then the base plate is slid down slightly and screws 94A and 94B completely threaded into the vertical counter wall surface. After attaching adaptor module 86 and flexible scanner, communication and power supply cables 5, 7, and 8 into their respective jacks in the adaptor module, support frame 12 is snap fitted over the mounted base plate, as shown in Fig. 12B, to provide an installed automatic bar code reading system, as shown in Fig. 13.

With automatic bar code reading device 2 positioned within scanner stand 3 as shown in Fig. 14, the system is automatically induced into its long-range hands-free mode of operation. In this configuration, bar code symbol 92 on object 91 can be easily read by the user grasping the object and bringing it into the short-range portion of the object detection field, as illustrated in Fig. 14. Thereupon, the object is automatically detected and bar code symbol 92 scanned by the visible laser beam repeatedly scanned across the scan field.

In order to read bar code symbols in the short-range hands-on mode of operation, the user grasps the handle portion of the bar code reading device as illustrated in Fig. 15A, and lifts it out of the scanner support stand. Then the user brings object 91 into the short-range portion of the object detection field as illustrated in Fig. 15B, so as to automatically detect the object and scan bar code symbol 92 with the visible laser beam repeatedly moving across the scan field. After the bar code symbol has been successfully read and an audible and/or visible indication thereof produced, the bar code reading device is placed back into the scanner support stand, automatically inducing the system into its long-range hands-free mode of operation.

In Figs. 16 through 17B, a point-of-sale station is shown comprising the automatic bar code reading system of the present invention operably connected to electronic cash register 6 by way of flexible communication and power supply cables 7 and 8. In this particular mounting installation, scanner support stand 3 is pivotally supported above a horizontal counter surface 96 by way of a pivotal joint assembly 97 connected to pedestal base 98 mounted under the electronic cash register.

As more clearly illustrated in Fig. 18, pivotal joint assembly 97 comprises a ball structure 99 joined to a mounting plate 100 by an extension 101. The pivotal joint assembly 97 also comprises a semispherical recess 102 formed in the end of a cylindrical support post 103. As shown in Fig. 18A, a ball clamping element 104, having a semispherical recess 105 and a bore 106, is connected to the distal end portion of support post 103 by an adjustment screw 107 passing through bore 106 and threaded into a hole

108 in the distal end portion of the support post. By rotating knob 109 attached to adjustment screw 107, aligned semispherical recesses 102 and 105 can be sufficiently separated apart to receive and retain ball structure 99.

5 With this structural arrangement, ball structure 99 can be securely clasped within semispherical recesses 102 and 105 at any desired orientation by simply tightening adjustment screw 107 with several turns of knob 109. As illustrated in Fig. 18A, mounting plate 100 is fixedly connected to base
10 plate 70 by bolts 110A through 110D threaded through holes 111A through 111D and 84A through 84D, respectively.

As illustrated in Fig. 18, the proximal end of support post 103 is fixedly connected to the upper portion of pedestal base member 98A, by screw 112. In order to
15 maintain the scanner support stand stationary during bar code reading operations, pedestal base member 98B is mounted under electronic cash register 6. When installed in the manner illustrated, scanner support stand 3 can be adjustably positioned and locked into virtually any
20 orientation in three-dimensional space, owing to the three principle degrees of freedom provided by the pivotal joint assembly. In Figs. 16A, 18, 18B and 18C, these degrees of freedom are illustrated with respect to the cartesian coordinate system shown embedded within the pivotal joint
25 assembly of the pedestal-mounted scanner support stand.

With automatic bar code reading device positioned within scanner stand 3 as shown in Fig. 16, the system is automatically induced into its long-range hands-free mode of operation. By simply moving object 91 into the object
30 detection field, the bar code symbol 92 is repeatedly scanned by the visible laser beam scanned across the scan

field. To induce the automatic bar code reading system into its short-range hands-on mode of operation, the user simply grasps the automatic bar code reading device and lifts it out of the scanner support stand, as illustrated in Fig.

5 17A. Then, by placing object 91 into the short-range portion of the object detection field, the object is automatically detected and bar code symbol 92 scanned by the visible laser beam repeatedly scanned across the scan field. After the bar code symbol has been successfully read and an
10 audible and/or visible indication thereof produced, the automatic bar code reading device can be placed back into the scanner support stand, automatically inducing the system into its long-range hands-free mode of operation.

Having described the preferred embodiment of the
15 present invention, several modifications come to mind.

For example, in alternative embodiments of the present invention, the automatic hand-supportable device may not incorporate within its housing, electronic circuitry for carrying out control, decoding other data processing
20 functions; instead such electronic circuitry may be contained within a remote unit operably associated with the hand-supportable device by way of the flexible scanner cable. In this embodiment, the hand-supportable device will function as an automatic hand-supportable laser scanner.
25 Alternatively, the housing may be adapted for hand-mounting.

The automatic bar code reading device and scanner support stand of the present invention provides a fully automatic bar code reading system characterized by a automatic long-range hands-free and short-range hands-on
30 mode of operation, high-speed symbol recognition, and versatility.

The automatic hand-supportable bar code reading device of the present invention has been provided with a wide variety of complex decision-making operations, endowing the system with a level of intelligence hitherto unattained in the bar code symbol reading art. Within the spirit of the present invention, additional decision-making operations may be provided to further enhance the capabilities of the system.

While the particular illustrative embodiments shown and described above will be useful in many applications in code symbol reading, further modifications to the present invention herein disclosed will occur to persons skilled in the art. All such modifications are deemed to be within the scope and spirit of the present invention defined by the appended claims.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS

1. A stand for receiving and supporting a hand-supportable laser scanning device in a selected position without user support, said hand-supportable laser scanning device including a hand-supportable housing having a handle portion operably configured with a head portion provided with a light transmissive window and within which a visible laser beam can be generated and projected through said light transmissive window and repeatedly scanned across a scan field defined external to said head portion, said head portion and said handle portion being disposed at an obtuse angle in the range of about 135° to about 180°, said stand including a support frame comprising:

a base portion having a longitudinal extent and being adapted for selected positioning with respect to a support surface;

a head portion support means operably associated with said base portion, for receiving and supporting the head portion of said hand-supportable housing;

a handle portion support means operably associated with said base portion, for receiving and supporting the handle portion of said hand-supportable housing; and

a finger accommodating recess disposed between said head portion support means and said handle portion support means and above said base portion, and being laterally accessible so that when the head and handle portions of said hand-supportable housing are received within and supported by said head portion support means and said handle portion support means, respectively, the fingers of a user's hand can be inserted through said finger accommodating recess and completely encircle the handle portion of said hand-supportable housing, thereby permitting

said handle portion to be completely grasped prior to removing said hand-supportable housing off and away from said support frame.

2. The stand of claim 1, wherein said hand-supportable housing includes a first ferrous element disposed within said handle portion, and wherein said handle portion support means includes a first magnetic element for magnetically attracting said first ferrous element when said handle portion is received within said handle portion support means.

3. The stand of claim 1, wherein said hand-supportable housing includes a second ferrous element disposed within said handle portion, and wherein said handle portion support means includes a second magnetic element for magnetically attracting said second ferrous element when said handle portion is received within said head portion support means.

4. The stand of claim 1, wherein said handle portion support means comprises a first support recess having a first substantially planar support surface surrounded by a first pair of perpendicularly extending side walls, for receiving and supporting the handle portion of said hand-supportable housing, and wherein said head portion support means comprises a second support recess having a second substantially planar support surface surrounding a second pair of perpendicularly extending side walls, for receiving and supporting the head portion of said hand-supportable housing.

5. The stand of claim 4, wherein said hand-supportable housing includes a first ferrous element disposed within said handle portion, and wherein said handle portion support means includes a first magnetic element for magnetically attracting said first ferrous element when said handle portion is received within said first support recess.

6. The stand of claim 5, wherein said hand-supportable housing includes a second ferrous element disposed within said head portion, and wherein said head portion support means includes a second magnetic element for magnetically attracting said second ferrous element when said head portion is received within said second support recess.

7. The stand of claim 1, wherein said head portion support means comprises means for permitting passage of said visible laser beam through said light transmissive window and across said scan field when the head portion of said hand-supportable housing is received within said head portion support means and the handle portion of said hand-supportable housing is received within said handle portion support means.

8. The stand of claim 7, wherein the head portion of said hand-supportable housing further comprises object detection means including means for transmitting energy into said scan field and means for receiving at least a portion of said transmitted energy so as to detect transmitted energy reflected off an object in said scan field and

activate the scanning of said visible laser beam, and
wherein said head portion support means further comprises
means for permitting said object detection means to transmit
energy into said scan field and receive transmitted energy
reflected from said object in said scan field.

9. The stand of claim 8, wherein said base portion
further comprises base supporting means for supporting said
base portion on a selected support surface.

10. The stand of claim 9, wherein said support frame
comprises a molded shell having formed therein, said base
portion, said head portion support means and said handle
portion support means, and wherein said base supporting
means comprises a base plate operably associatable with said
base portion so as to form a substantially enclosed interior
volume.

11. The stand of claim 10, which further comprises an
adaptor module concealed within said substantially enclosed
interior volume, for connecting a scanner connector and a
communications cable connector, wherein said scanner
connector is operably connected to a flexible scanner cable
which passes through the base portion of said molded shell
and extends into the handle portion of said hand-supportable
housing, and wherein said communications cable connector is
operably connected to flexible communication connector cable
and flexible power supply cable which also pass through the
base portion of said molded shell.

12. The stand of claim 11, wherein said adaptor module comprises voltage conversion means for converting the voltage level of said flexible power supply cable to one or more required voltage levels in said flexible scanner cable.

13. The stand of claim 11, wherein said base plate is operably connectable to the base portion of said molded shell by way of snap fit fastening means.

14. The stand of claim 13, wherein said base plate further comprises means for securing said base plate to a support surface selected from the group consisting of a substantially vertically disposed wall surface, a substantially vertically disposed counter wall surface, a substantially horizontally disposed counter surface, and a substantially horizontally disposed work surface.

15. The stand of claim 13, which further comprises pedestal means operably connected to said base plate and supported on said support surface so that when said hand-supportable laser scanning device is received and supported by said support frame, said scan field is arranged in a selected position and orientation with respect to said support surface.

16. A bar code symbol scanning system comprising:

(A) a hand-supportable laser scanning device including:

(1) a hand-supportable housing having a handle portion and a head portion operably connected to said handle portion at an obtuse angle in the range of about 135°

to 180°, said handle portion having a longitudinal extent and dimensions permitting said handle portion to be easily grasped in a user's hand, said head portion having a light transmissive window through which visible light can exit and enter said head portion;

(2) an activatable laser beam source in said head portion for producing, when activated, a visible laser beam directed through said light transmissive window, and into said scan field;

(3) an activatable scanning mechanism in said head portion for repeatedly scanning, when activated, said visible laser beam across said scan field;

(4) light detection means in said head portion for detecting the intensity of laser light reflected off a bar code symbol as said visible laser beam is repeatedly scanned across said scan field and said bar code symbol therein, and for automatically producing scan data indicative of the detected intensity of said reflected laser light; and

(5) flexible scanner cable operably associated with said light detection means and extending from said handle portion and terminating in a scanner connector;

(B) a stand for receiving and supporting said hand-supportable laser scanning device in a selected position without user support, said stand including a support frame comprising,

(1) a base portion having a longitudinal extent and being adapted for selected positioning with respect to a support surface;

(2) a head portion support means operably associated with said base portion, for receiving and supporting the head portion of said hand-supportable housing;

5 (3) a handle portion support means operably associated with said base portion, for receiving and supporting the handle portion of said hand-supportable housing; and

10 (4) a finger accommodating recess disposed between said head portion support means and said handle portion support means above said base portion and being laterally accessible so that when the head and handle portions of said hand-supportable housing are received within and supported by said head portion support means and
15 said handle portion support means, respectively, the fingers of a user's hand can be inserted through said finger accommodating recess and completely encircle the handle portion of said hand-supportable housing, thereby permitting
20 said handle portion to be completely grasped prior to removing said hand-supportable housing off and away from said support frame.

17. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 16, wherein said hand-supportable housing includes a first ferrous element disposed within said handle portion, and wherein said handle portion support means includes a first
5 ferrous element which magnetically attracts said first ferrous element when said handle portion is received within said handle portion support means.

18. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 17,
wherein said hand-supportable housing includes a second
ferrous element disposed within said handle portion, and
wherein said hand portion support means includes a second
magnetic element which magnetically attracts said second
ferrous element when said handle portion is received within
said head portion support means.

19. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 16,
wherein said handle portion support means comprises a first
support recess having a first substantially planar support
surface surrounded by a first pair of perpendicularly
extending side walls, for receiving and supporting the
handle portion of said hand-supportable housing, and wherein
said head portion support means comprises a second support
recess having a second substantially planar support surface
surrounding a second pair of perpendicularly extending side
walls, for receiving and supporting the head portion of said
hand-supportable housing.

20. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 19,
wherein said hand-supportable housing includes a first
ferrous element disposed within said handle portion, and
wherein said handle portion support means includes a first
magnetic element which magnetically attracts said first
ferrous element when said handle portion is received within
said first support recess.

21. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 20,
wherein said hand-supportable housing includes a second
ferrous element disposed within said head portion, and

wherein said head portion support means includes a second magnetic element which magnetically attracts said second ferrous element when said head portion is received within said second support recess.

22. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 16, wherein said head portion support means comprises means for permitting passage of said visible laser beam through said light transmissive window and across said scan field when the head portion of said hand-supportable housing is received within said head portion support means and the handle portion of said hand-supportable housing is received within said handle portion support means.

23. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 22, wherein the head portion of said hand-supportable housing further comprises object detection means including means for transmitting energy into said scan field and means for receiving at least a portion of said transmitted energy so as to detect transmitted energy reflected off an object in said scan field and produce an activation signal, and wherein said head portion support means further comprises means for permitting said object detection means to transmit energy into said scan field and receive transmitted energy reflected from an object in said scan field.

24. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 23, wherein said base portion further comprises base supporting means for supporting said base portion on a selected support surface.

25. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 24, wherein said support frame comprises a molded shell having formed therein said base portion, said head portion support means and said handle portion support means, and wherein said base supporting means comprises a base plate operably associatable with said base portion so as to form a substantially enclosed interior volume.

26. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 25, which further comprises an adaptor module concealed within said substantially enclosed interior volume, for connecting said scanner connector with a communications cable connector, wherein said scanner connector passes through a first aperture means in the base portion of said molded shell, and wherein said communications cable connector is operably connected to flexible communication cable and flexible power supply cable which passes through a second aperture means in the base portion of said molded shell.

27. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 26, wherein said adaptor module comprises voltage conversion means for converting the voltage level of said flexible power supply cable to one or more required voltage levels in said flexible scanner cable.

28. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 26, wherein said base plate is operably connectable to the base portion of said molded shell by way of snap fit fastening means.

29. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 28,
wherein said base plate further comprises means for securing
said base plate to a support surface selected from the group
consisting of a substantially vertically disposed wall
5 surface, a substantially vertically disposed counter wall
surface, a substantially horizontally disposed counter
surface, and a substantially horizontally disposed work
surface.

30. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 28,
which further comprises pedestal means operably connected to
said base plate and supported on said support surface so
that when said hand-supportable laser scanning device is
received and supported by said support frame, said scan
5 field is arranged in a selected position and orientation
with respect to said support surface.

31. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 23,
wherein said hand-supportable laser scanning device further
comprises:

(6) processing means for processing produced
5 scan data in order to detect and decode said bar code symbol
on said object, and upon detecting and decoding said bar
code symbol on said detected object, automatically producing
symbol character data representative of said decoded bar
code symbol; and

10 (7) control means for controlling the
operation of said bar code symbol scanning system, said
control means including

means for automatically activating said
activatable laser beam source and said activatable scanning

mechanism for up to a predetermined time period in response to the generation of said activation signal, and

means for automatically deactivating said activatable laser beam source and said activatable scanning mechanism in response to said scan data processing means failing to detect and decode said bar code symbol on said detected object within said predetermined time period.

32. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 22, wherein said hand-supportable laser scanning device further comprises:

(6) processing means for processing produced scan data in order to detect and decode said bar code symbol on said object, and upon detecting and decoding said bar code symbol on said detected object, automatically producing symbol character data representative of said decoded bar code symbol; and

(7) control means for controlling the operation of said bar code symbol scanning system, said control means including

means for automatically activating said activatable laser beam source and said activatable scanning mechanism for up to a predetermined time period in response to the generation of said activation signal, and

means for automatically deactivating said activatable laser beam source and said activatable scanning mechanism in response to said scan data processing means failing to detect and decode said bar code symbol on said detected object within said predetermined time period.

33. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 16,
wherein said hand-supportable bar code symbol scanning
device further comprises:

5 an object detection circuit in said head portion,
for detection of an object located within at least a portion
of said scan field, said object detection circuit including

means for transmitting pulsed energy into at least
a portion of said scan field, and

10 means for receiving transmitted pulsed energy
reflected off said object and automatically generating an
activation signal indicative of said object in said scan
field.

34. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 33,
which further comprises:

5 processing means for processing produced scan data
in order to detect and decode said bar code symbol on said
detected object, and upon detecting and decoding said bar
code symbol on said detected object, automatically producing
symbol character data representative of said decoded bar
code symbol, and

10 control means for controlling the operation of
said automatic bar code symbol reading system, said control
means including means for automatically activating said
activatable laser beam source and said activatable scanning
mechanism for up to a predetermined time period in response
to the generation of said activation signal, and

15 means for automatically deactivating said
activatable laser beam source and said activatable scanning
mechanism in response to said processing means failing to

detect and decode said bar code symbol on said detected object within said predetermined time period.

35. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 34, wherein said transmitted pulsed energy is pulsed infrared light produced from a pulsed infrared light source in said head portion, and wherein said pulsed energy receiving means comprise an optical element in said head portion for focusing reflected infrared light pulses onto an infrared light detector in said head portion.

36. A bar code symbol reading system comprising:

(A) a hand-supportable laser scanning device including:

(1) a hand-supportable housing having a handle portion and a head portion operably connected to said handle portion at an obtuse angle, said handle portion having a longitudinal extent and dimensions permitting said handle portion to be easily grasped in a user's hand, said head portion having a light transmissive window through which visible light can exit and enter said head portion;

(2) an activatable laser beam source in said head portion for producing, when activated, a visible laser beam directed through said light transmissive window and into a scan field defined external to said housing, said scan field being characterized as having at least one laser beam scanning plane;

(3) an activatable scanning mechanism in said head portion for repeatedly scanning, when activated, said visible laser beam across said scan field;

(4) light detection means in said head portion for detecting the intensity of laser light reflected off a bar code symbol on an object in said scan field as said visible laser beam is repeatedly scanned across said scan field and said bar code symbol, and for automatically producing scan data indicative of the detected intensity of said reflected laser light;

(5) object detection means in said head portion for detecting the presence of an object within an object detection field defined external to said head portion, said object detection means including means for transmitting energy into said scan field and means for receiving at least a portion of said transmitted energy within said object detection field so as to detect transmitted energy reflected off an object in said object detection field and produce in response thereto an activation signal, said object detection field being characterized as having a substantially volumetric extent and spatially encompassing at least a portion of said scan field within said operative scanning range; and

(6) flexible scanner cable operably connected to said light detection means and extending from said handle portion and terminating in a scanner connector; and

(B) processing means for processing produced scan data in order to detect and decode said bar code symbol on said detected object, and upon detecting and decoding said bar code symbol on said detected object, automatically producing symbol character data representative of said decoded bar code symbol;

(C) control means for controlling the operation of said automatic bar code symbol reading system, said control means including

means for automatically activating said
5 activatable laser beam source and said activatable scanning mechanism for up to a predetermined time period in response to the generation of said activation signal, and

means for automatically deactivating said
10 activatable laser beam source and said activatable scanning mechanism in response to said processing means failing to detect and decode said bar code symbol on said detected object within said predetermined time period.

37. The bar code symbol reading system of claim 36, wherein said object detection means has at least a short-range and a long-range mode of object detection,

wherein, when said object detection means is
5 induced in said short-range mode of object detection, said object detection means is only capable of detecting the presence of an object located within a short-range portion of said object detection field, and

wherein, when said object detection means is
10 induced in said long-range mode of object detection, said object detection means is capable of detecting the presence of an object located anywhere within a long-range portion of said object detection field.

38. The bar code symbol reading system of claim 37, wherein said bar code symbol scanning device further comprises

means for inducing said object detection means in
said short-range mode of object detection in response to the
presence of a short-range mode activation signal, and for
inducing said object detection means in said long-range mode
of object detection in response to the presence of a long-
range mode activation signal.

39. The bar code symbol reading system of claim 38,
which further comprises:

(C) a stand for receiving and supporting said
hand-supportable laser scanning device in a selected
position without user support, said stand including a
support frame comprising,

(1) a base portion having a longitudinal
extent and being adapted for selected positioning with
respect to a support surface;

(2) a head portion support means operably
associated with said base portion, for receiving and
supporting the head portion of said hand-supportable
housing; and

(3) a handle portion support means operably
associated with said base portion, for receiving and
supporting the handle portion of said hand-supportable
housing.

40. The bar code symbol reading system of claim 39,
wherein said hand-supportable laser scanning device further
comprises

support frame detection means in said hand-
supportable housing, for detecting the placement of said
hand-supportable housing in said support frame and

automatically producing said long-range mode activation
signal in response thereto, and for detecting the removal of
said hand-supportable housing from said support frame and
automatically producing said short-range mode activation
signal in response thereto.

41. The bar code symbol reading system of claim 40,
wherein said support frame further comprises means for
generating a magnetic field in the vicinity of said support
frame, and wherein said support frame detection means
further comprises means for detecting said magnetic field in
the vicinity of said support frame and automatically
producing said long-range mode activation signal in response
to the detection of said magnetic field.

42. The automatic bar code symbol reading system of
claim 39, wherein said support frame further comprises:

(4) a finger accommodating recess disposed
between said head portion support means and said handle
portion support means above said base portion and being
laterally accessible so that when the head and handle
portions of said hand-supportable housing are received
within and supported by said head portion support means and
said handle portion support means, respectively, the fingers
of a user's hand can be inserted through said finger
accommodating recess and completely encircle the handle
portion of said hand-supportable housing, thereby permitting
said handle portion to be completely grasped prior to
removing said hand-supportable housing off and away from
said support frame.

43. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 40,
wherein said hand-supportable housing includes a first
ferrous element disposed within said handle portion, and
wherein said handle portion support means includes a first
magnetic element which magnetically attracts said first
ferrous element when said handle portion is received within
said handle portion support means.

44. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 40,
wherein said hand-supportable housing includes a second
ferrous element disposed within said handle portion, and
wherein said hand portion support means includes a second
magnetic element which magnetically attracts said second
ferrous element when said handle portion is received within
said head portion support means.

45. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 40,
wherein said handle portion support means comprises a first
support recess having a first substantially planar support
surface surrounded by a first pair of perpendicularly
extending side walls disposed on opposite sides of said
first substantially supporting planar support surface, for
receiving and supporting the handle portion of said hand-
supportable housing, and wherein said head portion support
means comprises a second support recess having a second
substantially planar support surface surrounding a second
pair of perpendicularly extending side walls disposed on
opposite sides of said second substantially planar support
surface, for receiving and supporting the head portion of
said hand-supportable housing.

46. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 45,
wherein said hand-supportable housing includes a first
ferrous element disposed within said handle portion, and
wherein said handle portion support means includes a first
magnetic element for magnetically attracting said first
ferrous element when said handle portion is received within
said first support recess.

47. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 39,
wherein said hand-supportable housing includes a second
ferrous element disposed within said head portion, and
wherein said head portion support means includes a second
magnetic element for magnetically attracting said second
ferrous element when said head portion is received within
said second support recess.

48. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 39,
wherein said head portion support means comprises means for
permitting passage of said visible laser beam through said
light transmissive window and across said scan field when
the head portion of said hand-supportable housing is
received within said head portion support means and the
handle portion of said hand-supportable housing is received
within said handle portion support means.

49. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 48,
wherein said base portion further comprises base supporting
means for supporting said base portion on a selected support
surface.

50. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 49,
wherein said support frame comprises a molded shell having
formed therein said base portion, said head portion support
means and said handle portion support means, and wherein
5 said base supporting means comprises a base plate operably
associatable with said base portion so as to form a
substantially enclosed interior volume.

51. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 50,
which further comprises an adaptor module concealed within
said substantially enclosed interior volume, for connecting
said scanner connector with a communications cable
5 connector, wherein said scanner connector passes through a
first aperture means in the base portion of said molded
shell, and wherein said communications cable connector is
operably connected to flexible communication connector cable
and flexible power supply cable which passes through a
10 second aperture means in the base portion of said molded
shell.

52. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 51,
wherein said adaptor module comprises voltage conversion
means for converting the voltage level of said flexible
power supply cable to one or more required voltage levels in
5 said flexible scanner cable.

53. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 51,
wherein said base plate is operably connectable to the base
portion of said molded shell by way of snap fit fastening
means.

54. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 50,
wherein said base plate further comprises means for securing
said base plate to a support surface selected from the group
consisting of a substantially vertically disposed wall
surface, a substantially vertically disposed counter wall
surface, a substantially horizontally disposed counter
surface, and a substantially horizontally disposed work
surface.

55. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 50,
which further comprises pedestal means operably connected to
said base plate and supported on said support surface so
that when said hand-supportable laser scanning device is
received and supported by said support frame, said scan
field is arrangible in a selected position and orientation
with respect to said support surface.

56. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 40,
wherein said head portion support means comprises means for
permitting passage of said visible laser beam through said
light transmissive window and across said scan field when
the head portion of said hand-supportable housing is
received within said head portion support means and the
handle portion of said hand-supportable housing is received
within said handle portion support means.

57. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 56,
wherein the head portion of said hand-supportable housing
further comprises object detection means including means for
transmitting energy into said scan field and means for
receiving at least a portion of said transmitted energy so

as to detect transmitted energy reflected off an object in said scan field and activate the scanning of said visible laser beam, and wherein said head portion support means further comprises means for permitting said object detection means to transmit energy into said scan field and receive transmitted energy reflected from an object in said scan field.

58. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 57, wherein said base plate further comprises means for securing said base plate to a support surface selected from the group consisting of a substantially vertically disposed wall surface, and a substantially vertically disposed counter wall surface.

59. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 57, which further comprises pedestal means operably connected to said base plate and supported on said support surface so that when said hand-supportable laser scanning device is received and supported by said support frame, said scan field is arranged in a selected position and orientation with respect to said support surface.

60. A bar code symbol reading system comprising:

(A) a hand-supportable laser scanning device including

(1) a hand-supportable housing having a head portion with a light transmissive window through which visible light can exit and enter said head portion;

(2) object detection means in said head portion for detecting the presence of an object within an

object detection field defined external to said head
portion, said object detection means including means for
receiving energy from said object detection field, and means
to automatically generate an activation signal in response
5 to the detection of energy reflected off an object located
in said object detection field, said object detection field
being characterized by having a three-dimensional geometry
of volumetric expanse extending forwardly of said light
transmissive window, said object detection means further
10 having at least a short-range and a long-range mode of
object detection,

wherein, when said object detection means is
induced in said short-range mode of object detection, said
object detection means is only capable of detecting the
15 presence of an object located within a short-range portion
of said object detection field, and

wherein, when said object detection means is
induced in said long-range mode of object detection, said
object detection means is capable of detecting the presence
20 of an object located anywhere within a long-range portion of
said object detection field;

(3) an activatable laser beam source in said
head portion for producing, when activated, a visible laser
beam directed through said light transmissive window into a
25 scan field defined external to said housing, said scan field
being characterized as having at least one laser beam
scanning plane and being spatially encompassed by said
object detection field along at least said long and short
portions of said object detection field;

(4) an activatable scanning mechanism in said head portion for repeatedly scanning, when activated, said visible laser beam across said scan field;

(5) light detection means in said head portion for detecting the intensity of laser light reflected off a bar code symbol on said detected object as said visible laser beam is repeatedly scanned across said scan field and said bar code symbol, and for automatically producing scan data indicative of the detected intensity of said reflected laser light;

(B) processing means for processing produced scan data in order to detect and decode said bar code symbol on said detected object, and upon detecting and decoding said bar code symbol on said detected object, automatically producing symbol character data representative of said decoded bar code symbol;

(C) control means for controlling the operation of said automatic bar code symbol reading system, said control means including

means for automatically activating said activatable laser beam source and said activatable scanning mechanism for up to a predetermined time period in response to the generation of said activation signal, and

means for automatically deactivating said activatable laser beam source and said activatable scanning mechanism in response to said processing means failing to detect and decode said bar code symbol on said detected object within said predetermined time period.

61. The bar code symbol reading system of claim 60, which further comprises:

means for inducing said object detection means in
said short-range mode of object detection in response to the
presence of a short-range mode activation signal, and for
inducing said object detection means in said long-range mode
of object detection in response to the presence of a long-
range mode activation signal.

62. The bar code symbol reading system of claim 61,
wherein said hand-supportable housing further comprises a
handle portion operably configured with said head portion
and which can be easily grasped within a user's hand, and
wherein said bar code symbol reading system comprises:

a stand for receiving and supporting said hand-
supportable laser scanning device in a selected position
without user support, said stand including a support frame
comprising,

a base portion having a longitudinal extent and
being adapted for selected positioning with respect to a
support surface,

a head portion support means operably associated
with said base portion, for receiving and supporting the
head portion of said hand-supportable housing, and

a handle portion support means operably associated
with said base portion, for receiving and supporting the
handle portion of said hand-supportable housing.

63. The bar code symbol reading system of claim 62,
wherein said hand-supportable laser scanning device further
comprises

support frame detection means in said hand-
supportable housing, for detecting the placement of said

hand-supportable housing in said support frame and automatically producing said long-range mode activation signal in response thereto.

64. The bar code symbol reading system of claim 63, wherein said support frame further comprises means for generating a magnetic field in the vicinity of said support frame, and wherein said support frame detection means further comprises means for detecting said magnetic field in the vicinity of said support frame and automatically producing said long-range mode activation signal in response to the detection of said magnetic field.

65. The bar code symbol reading system of claim 62, wherein said support frame further comprises:

(4) a finger accommodating recess disposed between said head portion support means and said handle portion support means above said base portion and being laterally accessible so that when the head and handle portions of said hand-supportable housing are received within and supported by said head portion support means and said handle portion support means, respectively, the fingers of a user's hand can be inserted through said finger accommodating recess and completely encircle the handle portion of said hand-supportable housing, thereby permitting said handle portion to be completely grasped prior to removing said hand-supportable housing off and away from said support frame.

66. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 43, wherein said hand-supportable housing includes a first

ferrous element disposed within said handle portion, and wherein said handle portion support means includes a first magnetic element which magnetically attracts said first ferrous element when said handle portion is received within said handle portion support means..

67. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 62, wherein said hand-supportable housing includes a second ferrous element disposed within said handle portion, and wherein said hand portion support means includes a second magnetic element which magnetically attracts said second ferrous element when said handle portion is received within said head portion support means.

68. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 62, wherein said handle portion support means comprises a first support recess having a first substantially planar support surface surrounded by a first pair of perpendicularly extending side walls disposed on opposite sides of said first substantially supporting planar support surface, for receiving and supporting the handle portion of said hand-supportable housing, and wherein said head portion support means comprises a second support recess having a second substantially planar support surface surrounding a second pair of perpendicularly extending side walls disposed on opposite sides of said second substantially planar support surface, for receiving and supporting the head portion of said hand-supportable housing.

69. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 62, wherein said head portion support means comprises means for

5 permitting passage of said visible laser beam through said light transmissive window and across said scan field when the head portion of said hand-supportable housing is received within said head portion support means and the handle portion of said hand-supportable housing is received within said handle portion support means.

70. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 62, wherein said base portion further comprises base supporting means for supporting said base portion on a selected support surface.

71. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 70, wherein said support frame comprises a molded shell having formed therein said base portion, said head portion support means and said handle portion support means, and wherein said base supporting means comprises a base plate operably associated with said base portion so as to form a substantially enclosed interior volume.

72. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 71, wherein said base plate further comprises means for securing said base plate to a support surface selected from the group consisting of a substantially vertically disposed wall surface, a substantially vertically disposed counter wall surface, a substantially horizontally disposed counter surface, and a substantially horizontally disposed work surface.

73. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 71, which further comprises pedestal means operably connected to

said base plate and supported on said support surface so that when said hand-supportable laser scanning device is received and supported by said support frame, said scan field is arrangable in a selected position and orientation with respect to said support surface.

74. The bar code symbol scanning system of claim 62, wherein the head portion of said hand-supportable housing further comprises object detection means including means for transmitting energy into said scan field and means for receiving at least a portion of said transmitted energy so as to detect transmitted energy reflected off an object in said scan field and activate the scanning of said visible laser beam, and wherein said head portion support means further comprises means for permitting said object detection means to transmit energy into said scan field and receive transmitted energy reflected from an object in said scan field.

75. The bar code reading system of claim 61, wherein said processing means has at least a short-range and a long-range mode of bar code scan range detection,

wherein, when said processing means is induced in said long-range mode of bar code scan range detection, said data processing means is only capable of producing symbol character data representative of a detected and decoded bar code symbol which is located within a prespecified long-range portion of said object detection field; and

wherein, when said processing means is induced in said short-range mode of bar code scan range detection, said processing means is only capable of producing symbol

character data representative of a detected and decoded bar code symbol which is located within a prespecified short-range portion of said scan field.

76. The bar code symbol reading system of claim 75, wherein said processing means further comprises

scan range detection means for processing produced scan data to determine whether a detected and decoded bar code symbol resides within the short-range portion or the long-range portion of said scan field.

77. The bar code symbol reading system of claim 76, wherein, when said processing means is induced in said short-range mode of bar code scan range detection, said processing means automatically produces symbol character data representative of said decoded bar code symbol only

(i) upon detecting and decoding said scanned bar code symbol on said detected object, and

(ii) when said bar code scan range detection means determines that said detected and decoded bar code symbol resides within the short-range portion of said scan field.

78. The bar code symbol reading system of claim 77, wherein, when said processing means is induced in said long-range mode of bar code scan range detection, said processing means automatically produces symbol character data representative of said decoded bar code symbol only

(i) upon detecting and decoding said scanned bar code symbol on said detected object, and

11) when said bar code scan range detection means determines that said detected and decoded bar code symbol resides within the long-range portion of said scan field.

79. The bar code symbol reading system of claim 61, wherein said processing means has at least a short-range and a long-range mode of bar code scan range detection,

5 wherein, when said processing means is induced in said short-range mode of bar code scan range detection, said processing means is only capable of reading a detected bar code symbol located within a short-range portion of said scan field; and

10 wherein, when said processing means is induced in said long-range mode of bar code scan range detection, said data processing means is capable of reading a detected bar code symbol located within a long-range portion of said scan field.

80. The bar code symbol reading system of claim 79, wherein said processing means further comprises:

5 scan range detection means for processing produced scan data to determine whether a detected and decoded bar code symbol resides within the short-range portion or the long-range portion of said scan field.

81. The bar code symbol reading system of claim 75, which further comprises:

5 means for inducing said processing means in said short-range mode of bar code scan range detection in response to the presence of said short-range mode activation signal, and for inducing said processing means in said long-

range mode of bar code scan range detection in response to the presence of a long-range mode activation signal.

82. The bar code symbol reading system of claim 81, which further comprises:

5 a stand for receiving and supporting said hand-supportable laser scanning device in a selected position without user support, said stand including a support frame including,

a base portion having a longitudinal extent and being adapted for selected positioning with respect to a support surface,

10 a head portion support means operably associated with said base portion, for receiving and supporting the head portion of said hand-supportable housing, and

15 a handle portion support means operably associated with said base portion, for receiving and supporting the handle portion of said hand-supportable housing.

83. The bar code symbol reading system of claim 82, wherein said support frame further comprises means for generating a magnetic field in the vicinity of said support frame, and wherein said support frame detection means
5 further comprises means for detecting said magnetic field in the vicinity of said support frame and automatically producing said long-range mode activation signal in response to the detection of said magnetic field.

84. An automatic bar code symbol reading system, comprising:

a hand-supportable housing having a light transmission aperture through which visible light can exit and enter into said hand-supportable housing;

object detection means in said hand-holdable housing, for detecting an object located in an object detection field defined external to said to said hand-supportable housing, said object detection means including,

an infrared light emitting diode disposed in said hand-supportable housing for transmitting pulsed infrared light into said scan field,

an aperture formed in said hand-supportable housing,

an infrared light photodiode disposed in said hand-supportable housing immediately adjacent to said aperture in order to directly determine the geometrical characteristics and dimensions of said object detection field, and for detecting said pulsed infrared light reflected off an object located in said object detection field, and

means for automatically generating an activation signal in response to the detection of pulsed infrared light reflected off said object in said object detection field by said infrared light photodiode;

activatable scan data producing means in said hand-supportable housing, for producing scan data from a detected object located in a scan field defined external to said hand-supportable housing, scan field being characterized as having at least one laser beam scanning plane and being spatially encompassed by said object detection field along at least a portion of said scan field, said scan data producing means including,

a laser diode for generating a visible laser beam,

means for directing said visible laser beam through said light transmission aperture and into said scan field,

laser beam scanning means for repeatedly scanning said visible laser beam across said scan field and a bar code symbol on said detected object,

laser light detecting means for detecting the intensity of laser light reflected off said bar code symbol and passing through said light transmission aperture as said visible laser beam is repeatedly scanned across said scan field and said bar code symbol on said detected object, and

means for automatically producing scan data indicative of said detected intensity;

activatable scan data processing means for processing produced scan data in order to detect and decode said bar code symbol on said detected object, and automatically producing symbol character data representative of said decoded bar code symbol; and

control means for controlling the operation of said automatic bar code symbol reading system, said control means including,

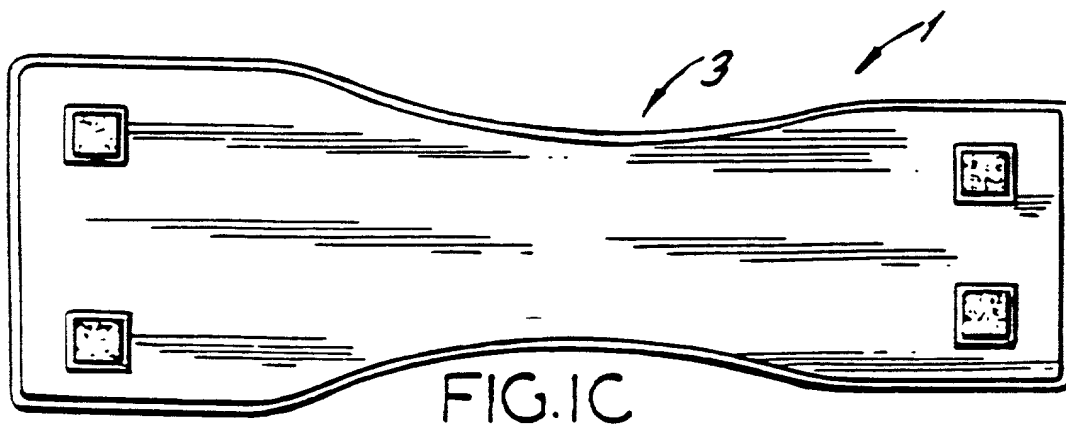
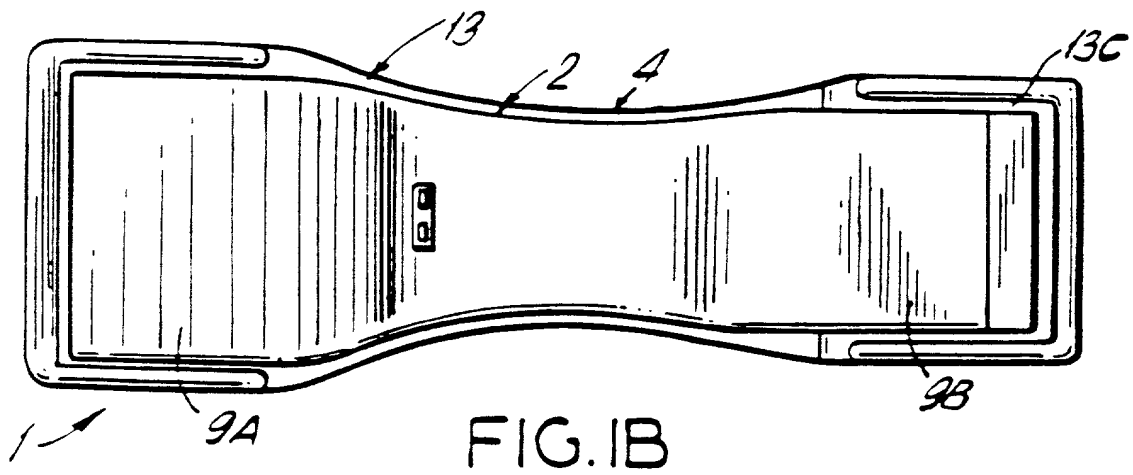
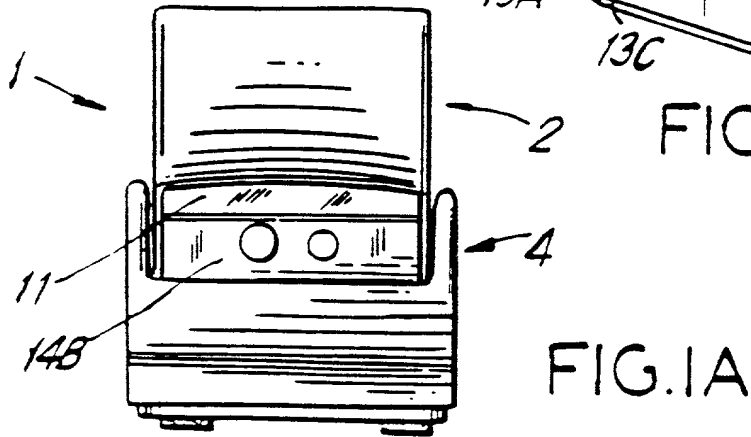
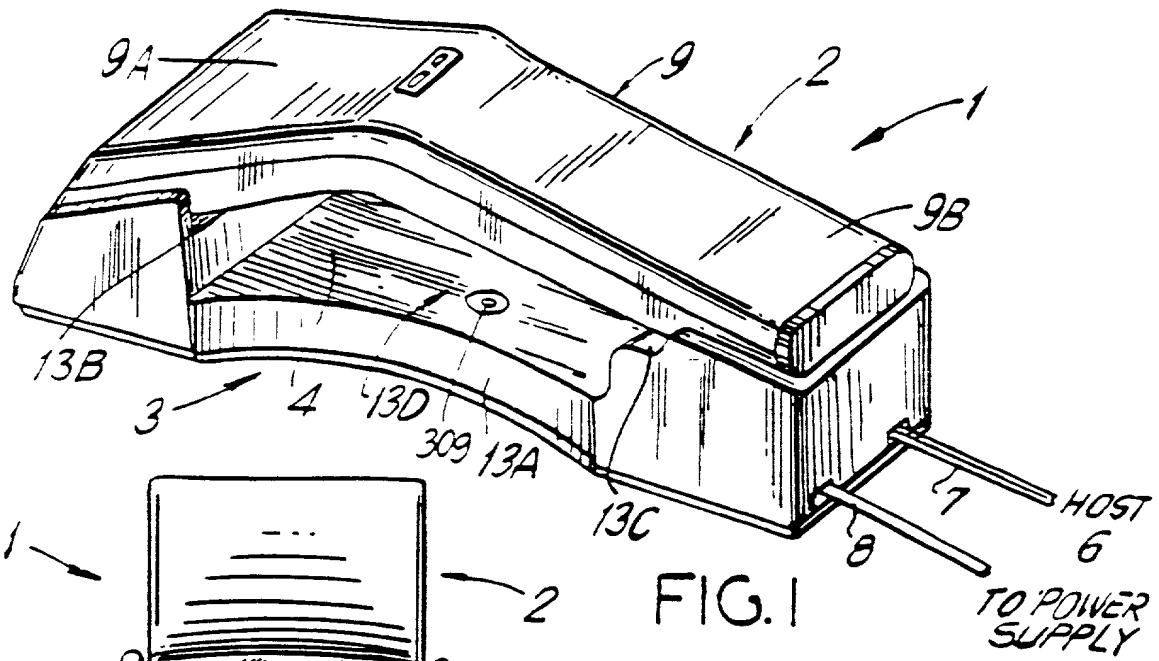
means for automatically activating said activatable data producing means and said activatable scan data processing means for up to a predetermined time period in response to the generation of said activation signal, and

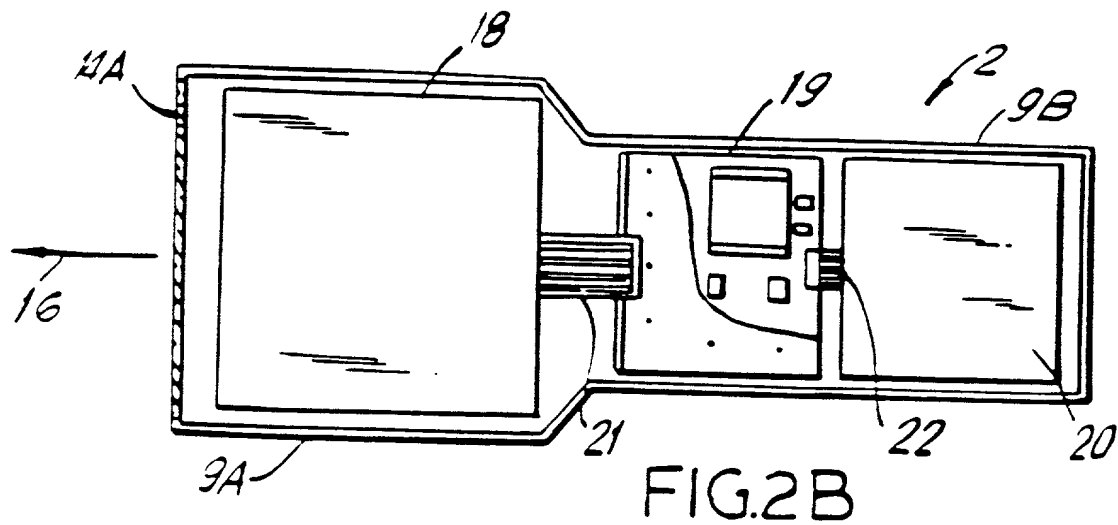
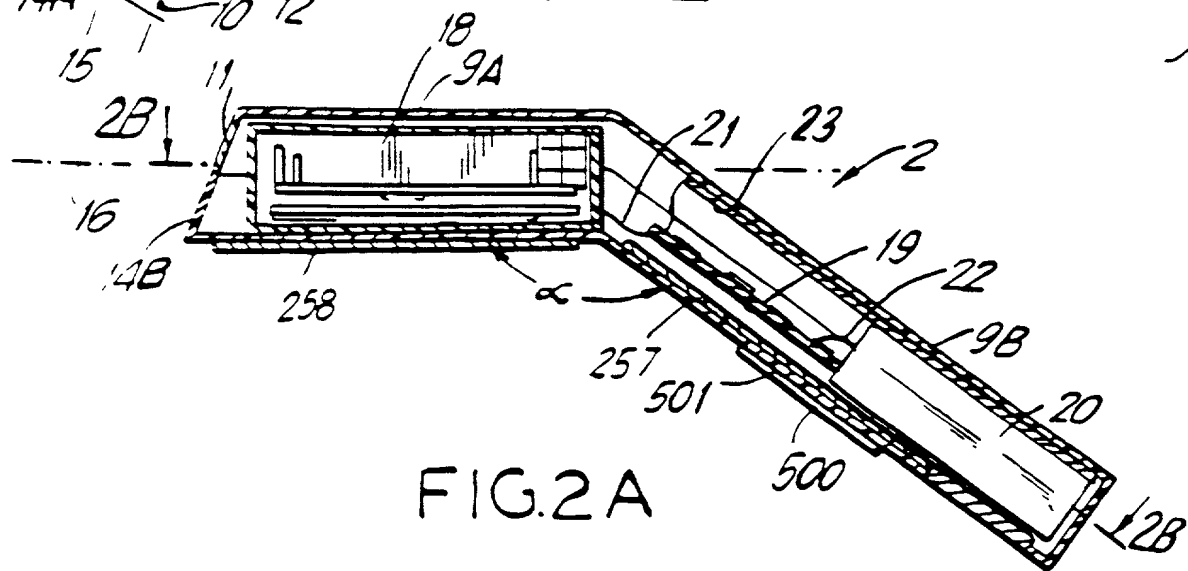
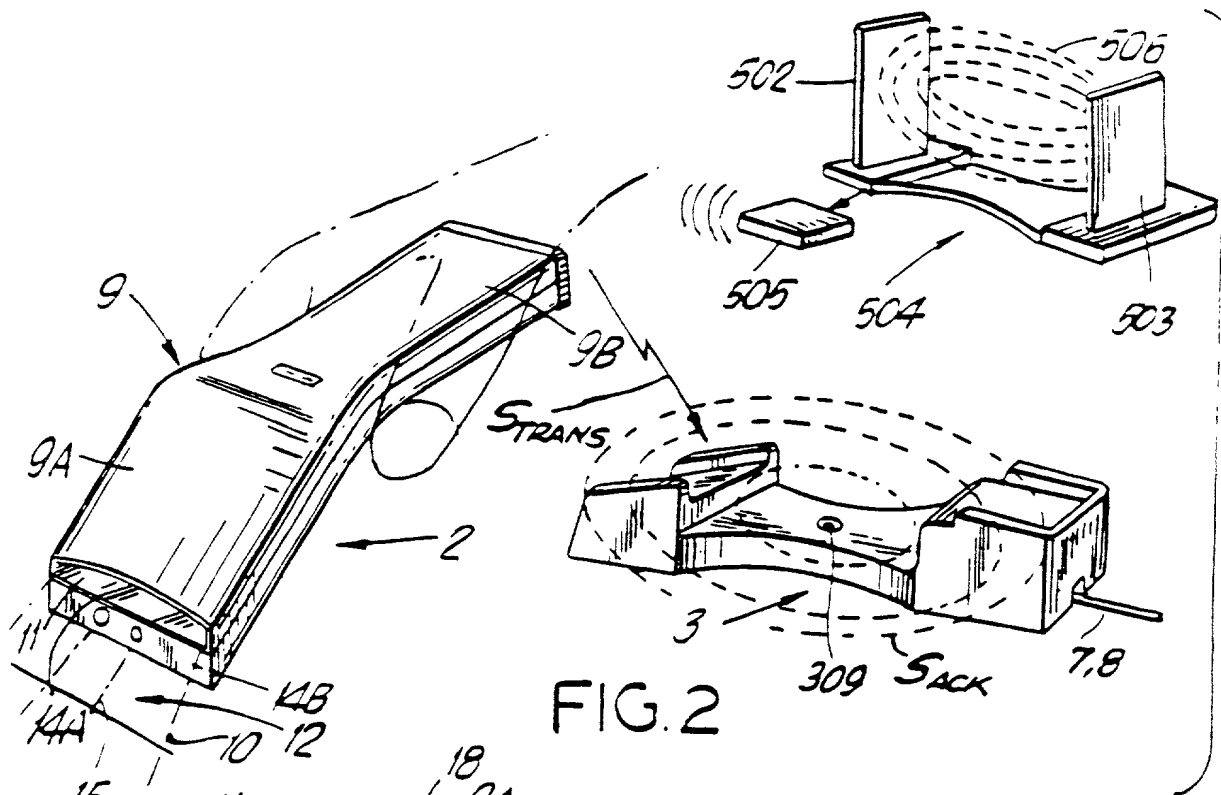
means for automatically deactivating said activatable scan data producing means and said activatable scan data processing means in response to the failure of said scan data processing means to detect and decode said

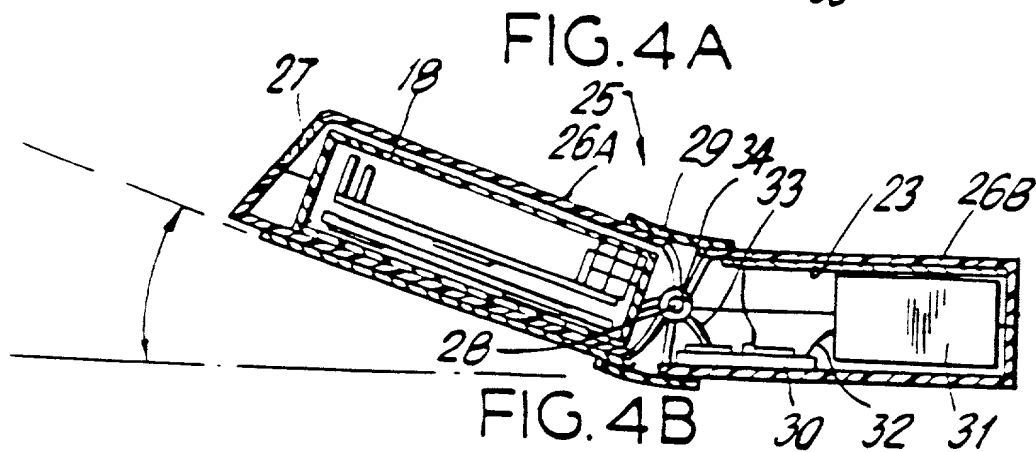
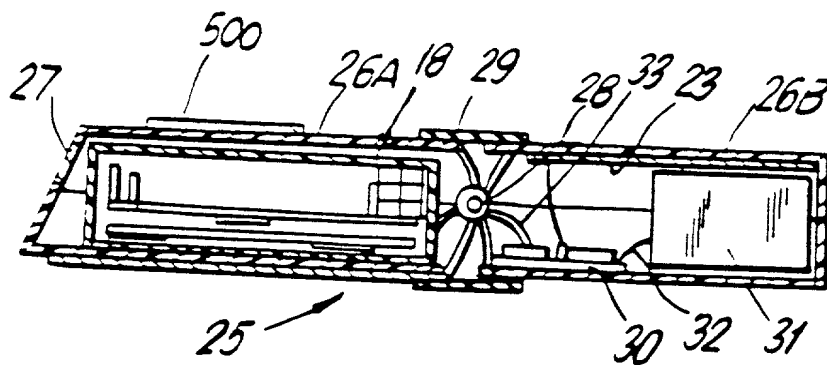
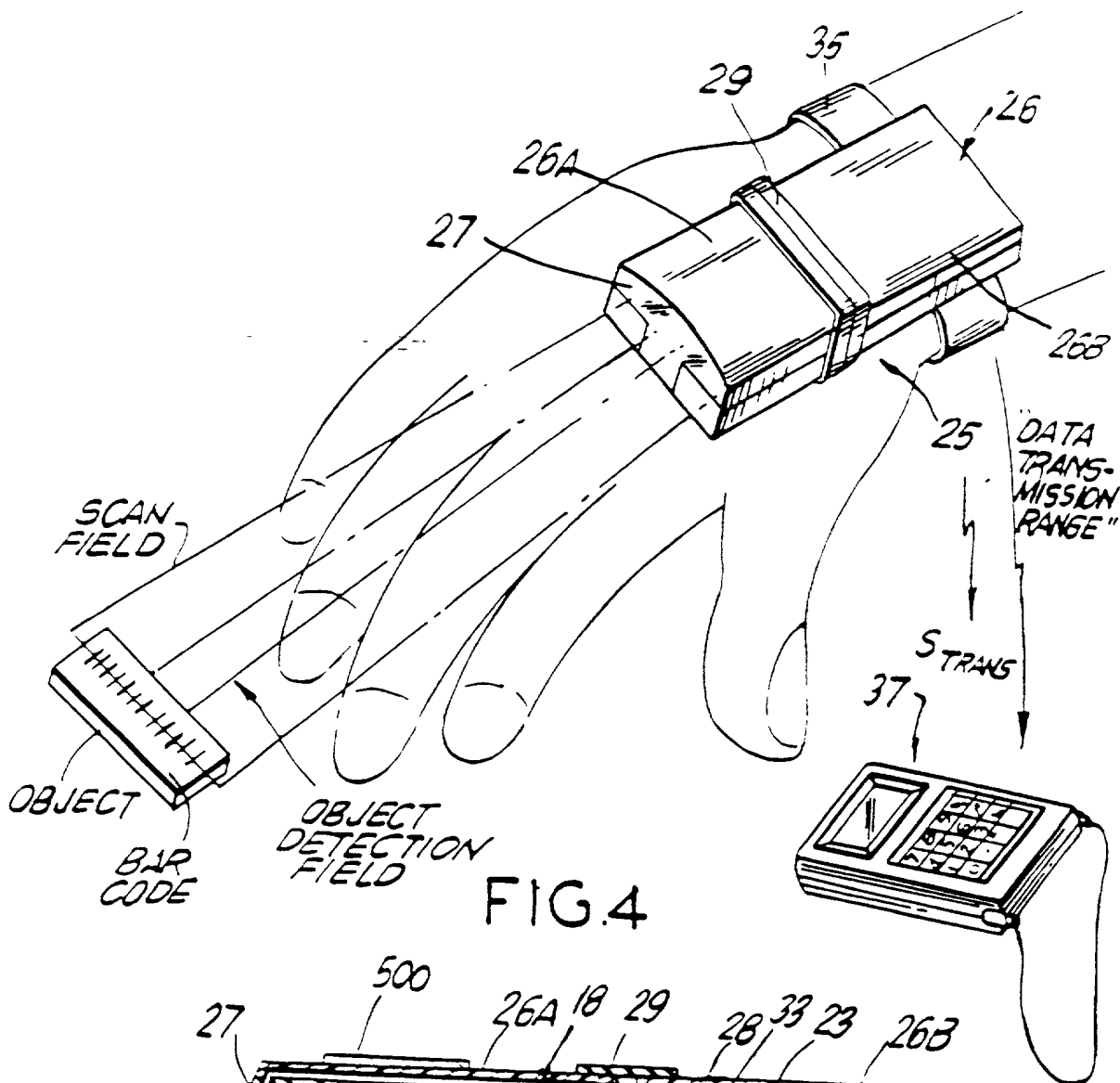
bar code symbol on said detected object within said
predetermined time period.

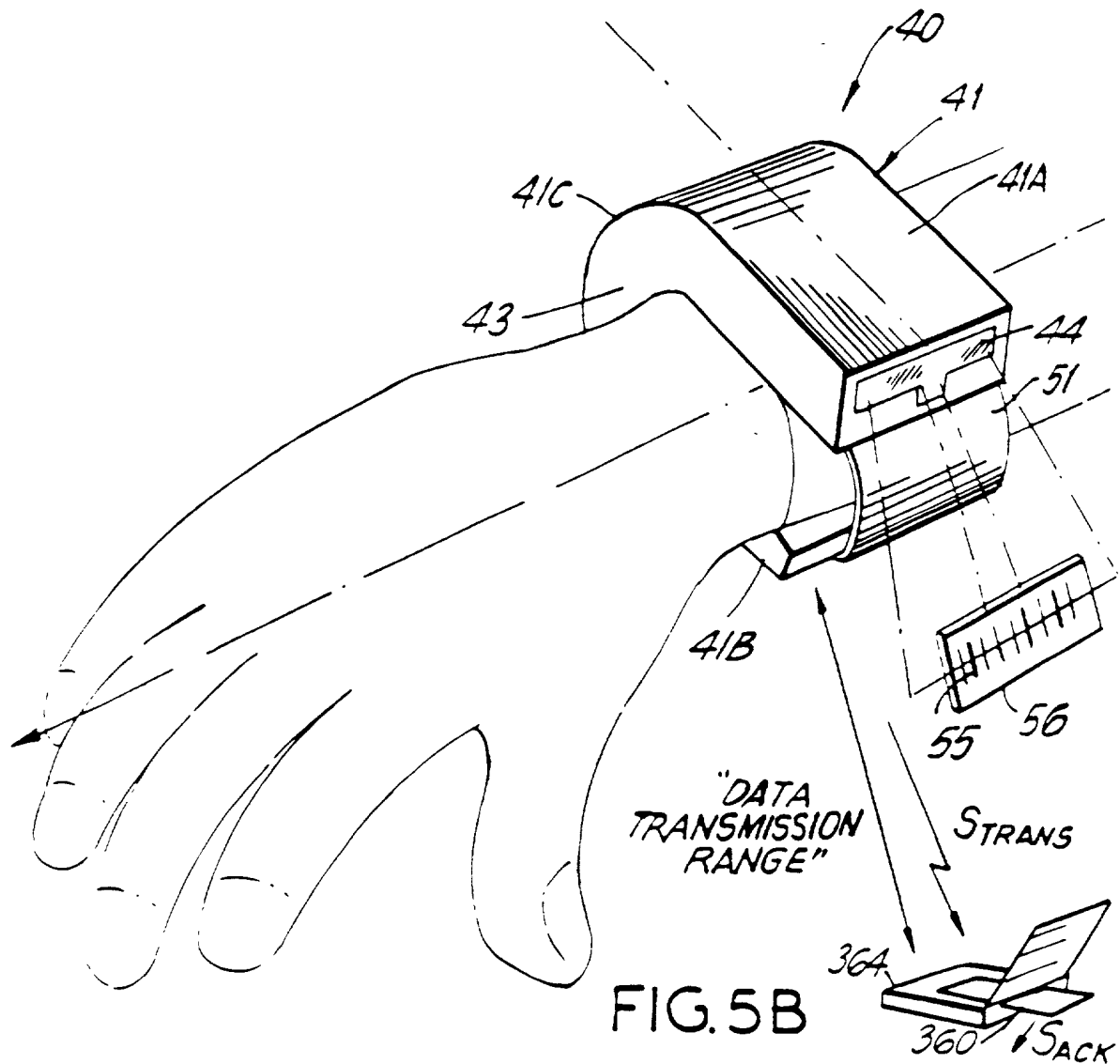
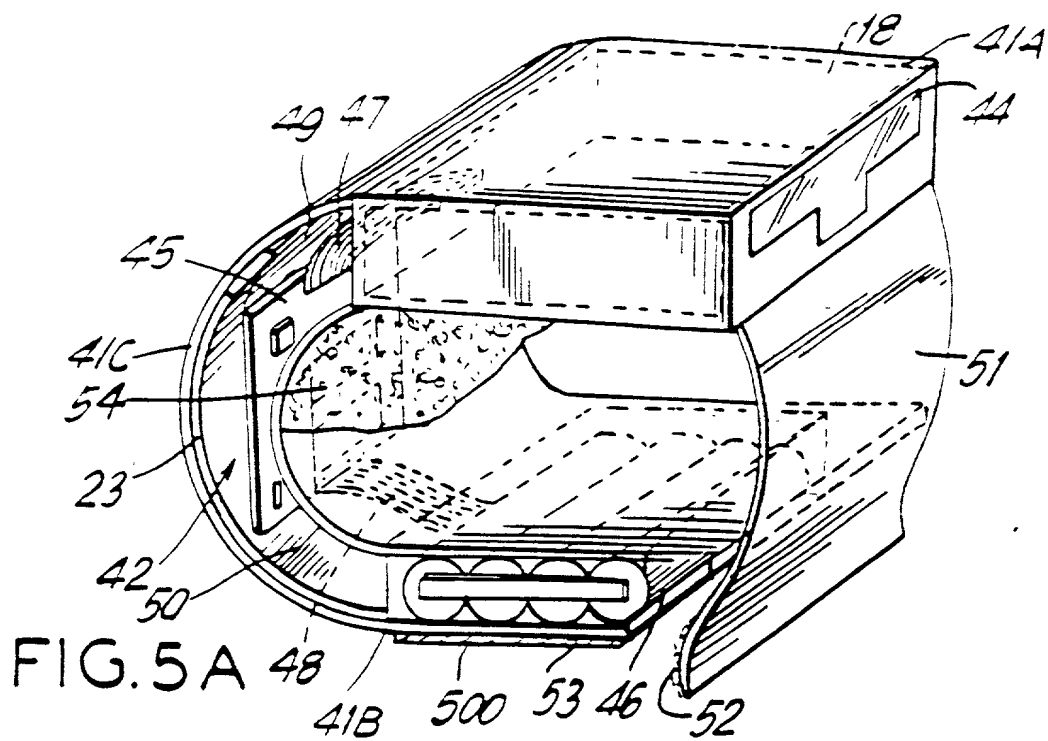
Abstract Of Disclosure

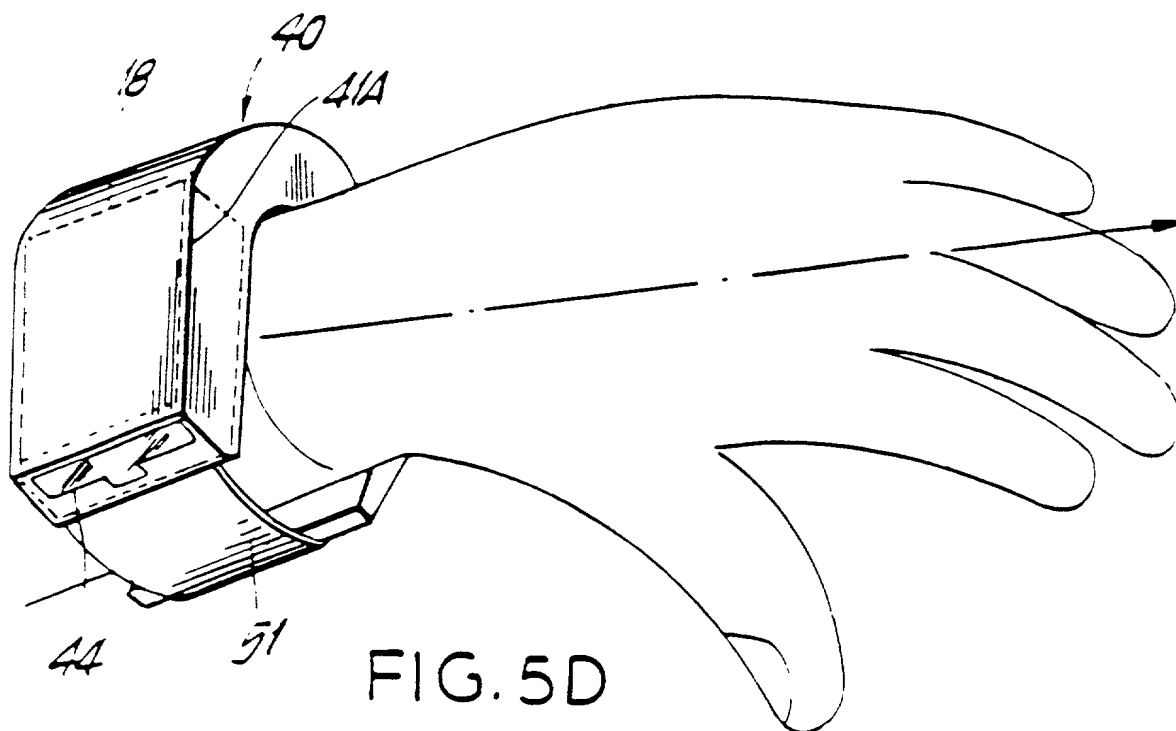
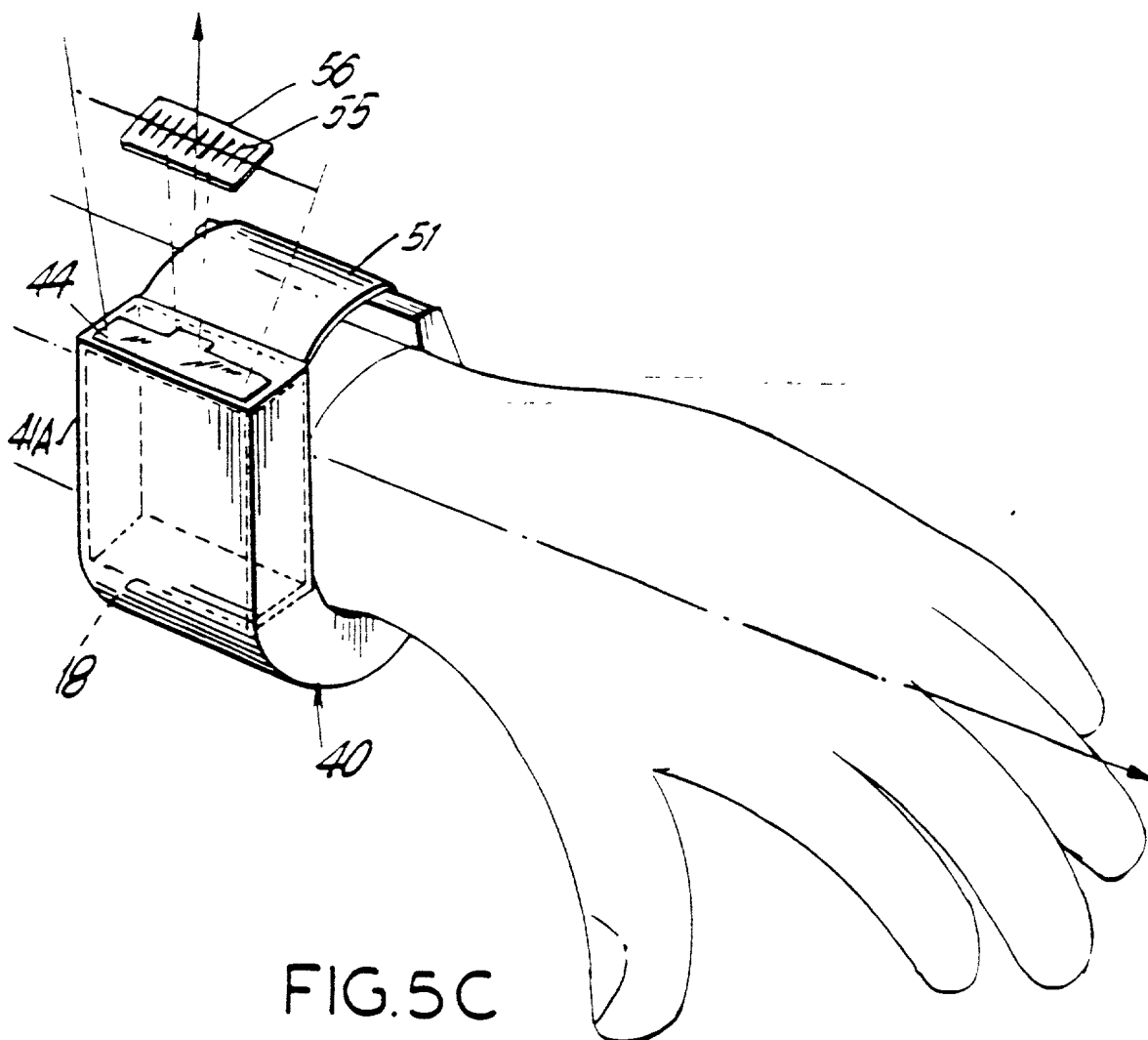
Disclosed is a fully automatic bar code symbol reading system having an hand-supportable laser bar code reading device which can be used in either an automatic hands-on mode of operation, or in an automatic hands-free mode of operation. The system includes a scanner support frame for supporting the hand-supportable device in a user-selected mounting position, and permits complete gripping of its handle portion prior to its use in the hands-on mode of operation. In general, the hand-supportable bar code reading device has long-range and short-range modes of object detection, bar code presence detection and bar code symbol reading. In the illustrative embodiment, the long-range mode is automatically selected when the hand-supportable bar code reading device is placed within the scanner support stand during the automatic hands-free mode of operation. Whenever the hand-supportable bar code reading device is picked up from the support stand and used in its hands-on mode of operation, the short-range mode is automatically selected to provide CCD-like scanner emulation. When used in either mode of operation, the automatic bar code reading device is capable of reading, in a consecutive manner, one or more bar code symbols on an object, while preventing multiple reading of the same bar code symbol due to dwelling of the laser scanning beam upon the bar code symbol. The automatic bar code symbol reading system of the present invention is disclosed in several different mounting arrangements at a point-of-sale station, illustrating novel methods of reading bar code symbols using the automatic hand-supportable laser scanning device of the present invention.

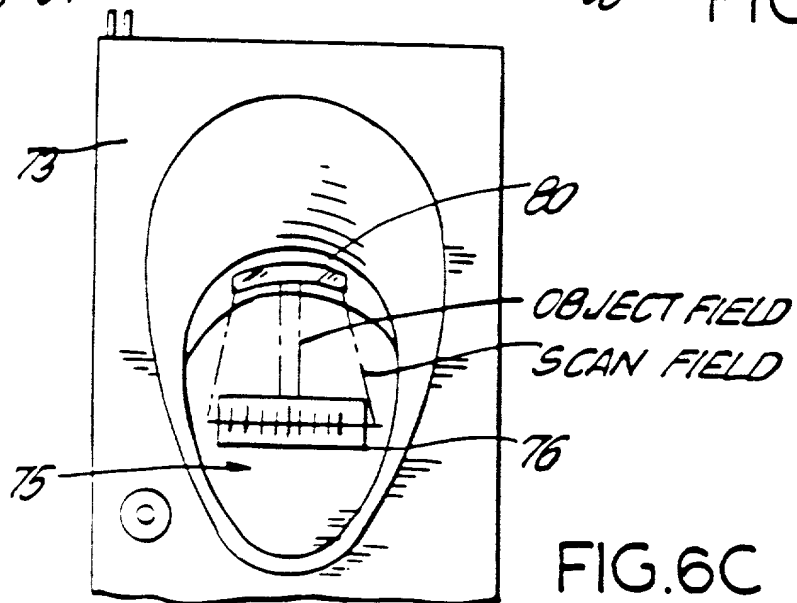
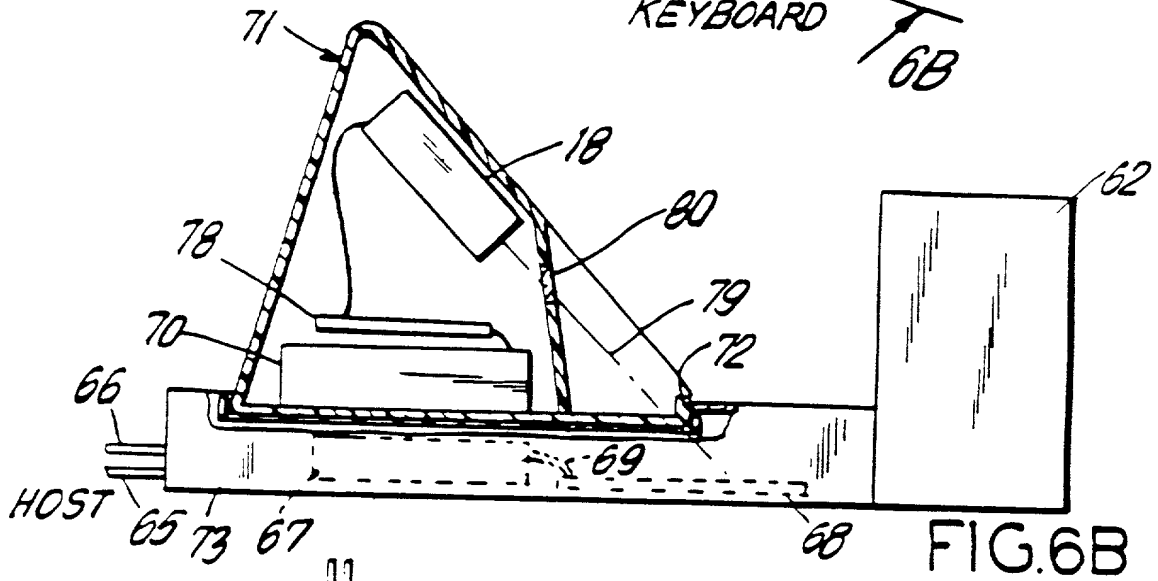
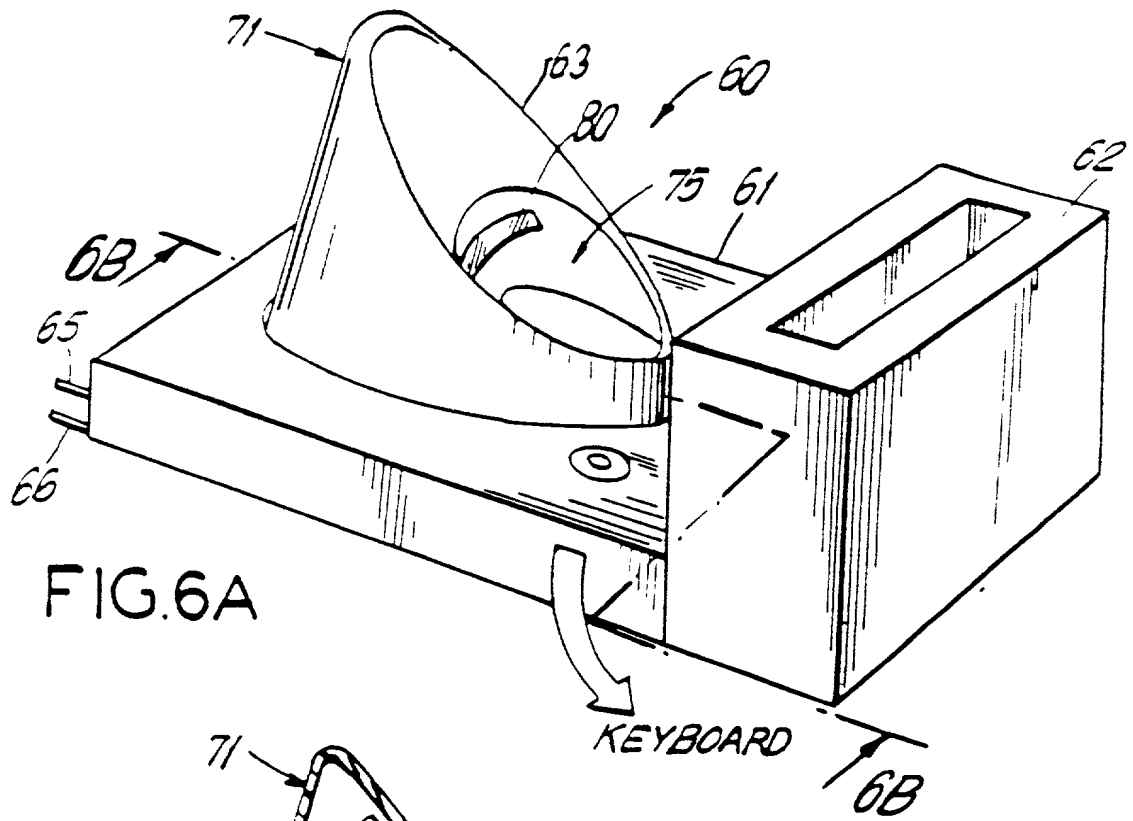












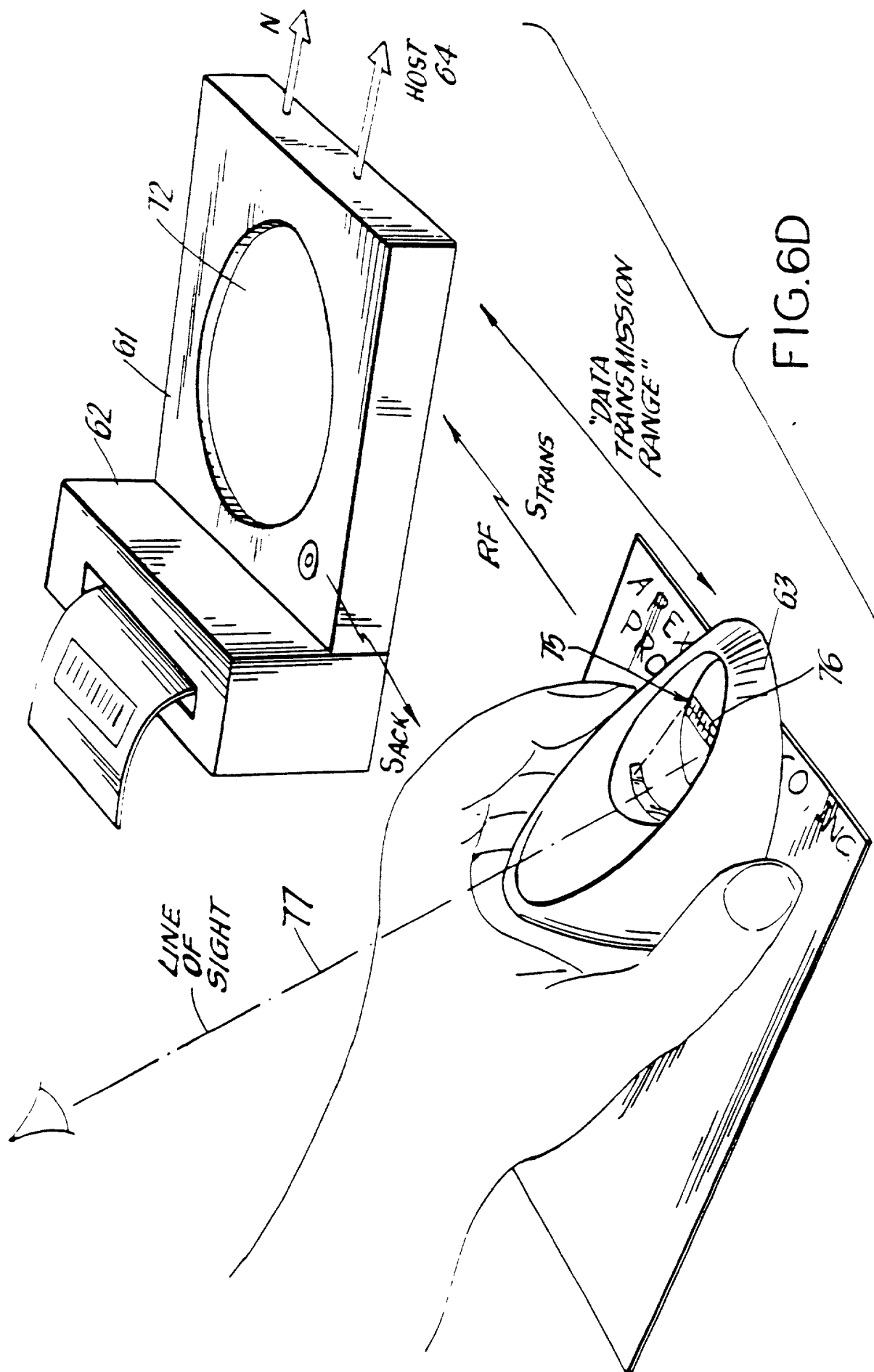


FIG. 6D

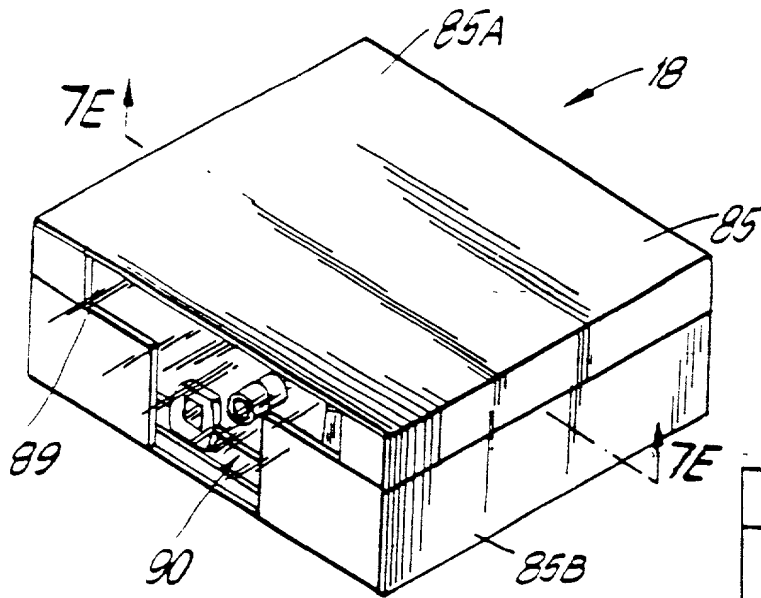


FIG. 7A

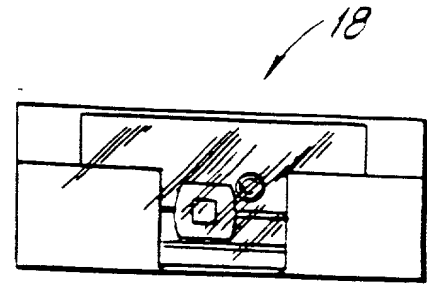


FIG. 7B

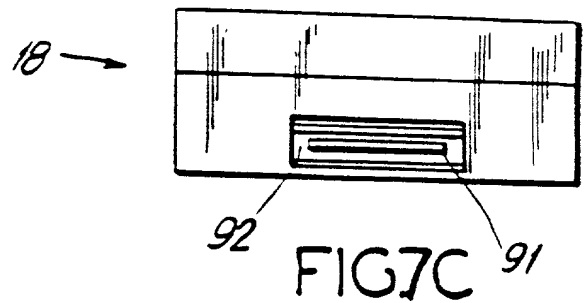


FIG. 7C

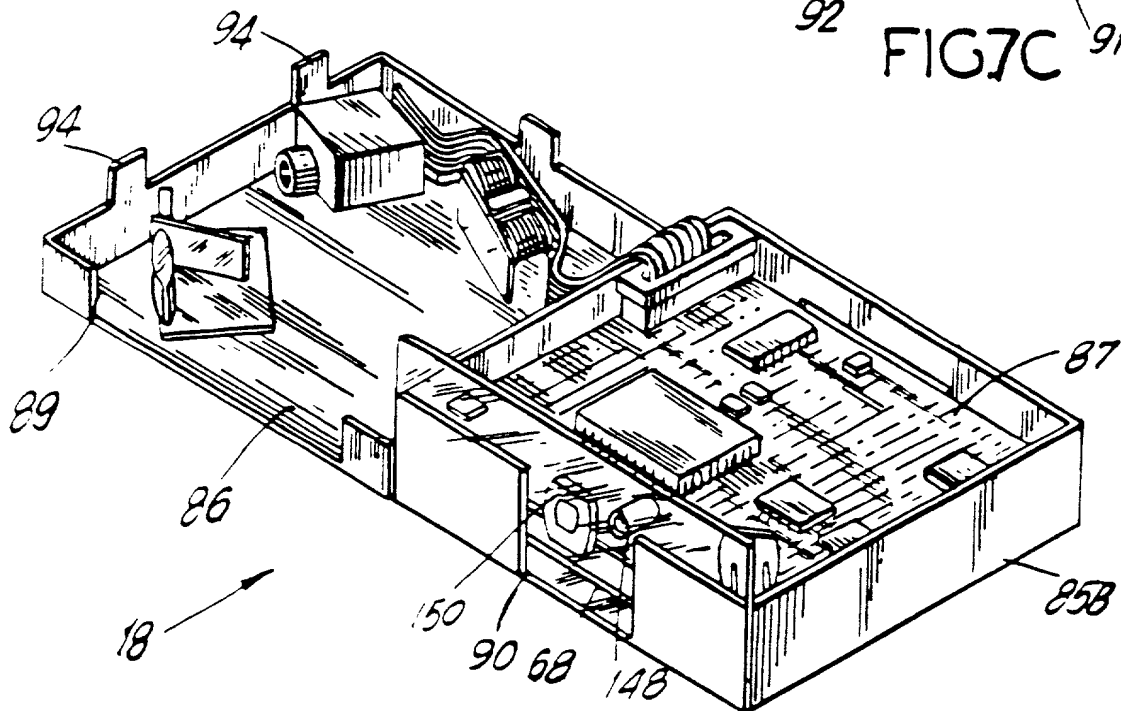


FIG. 7D

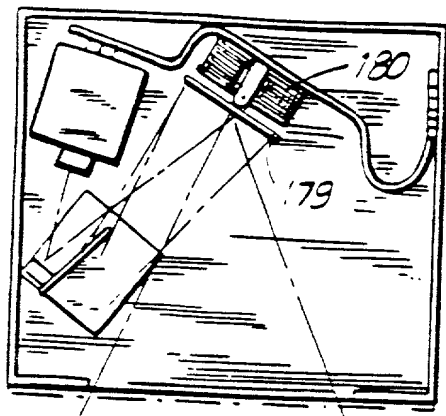


FIG. 7E

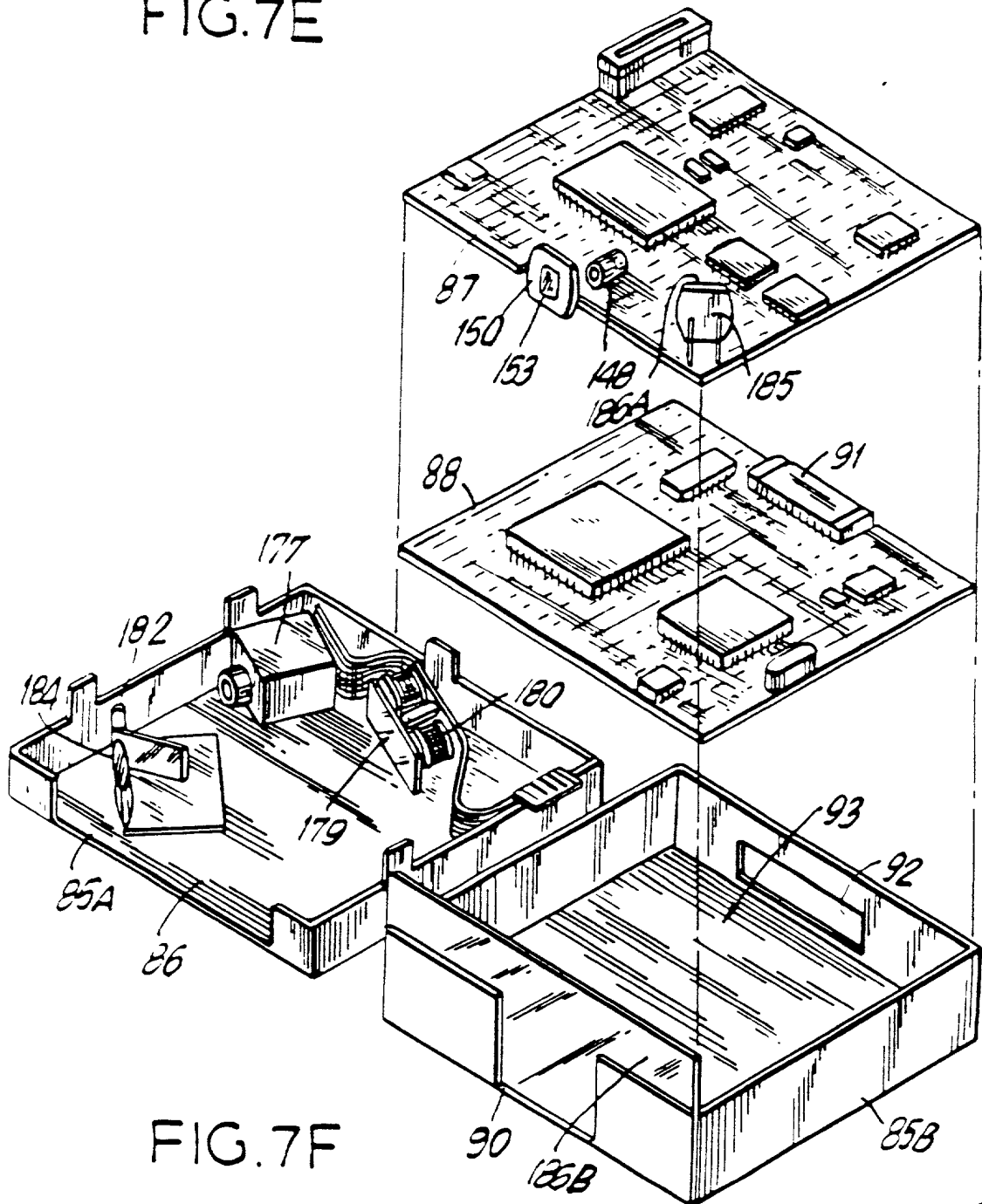


FIG. 7F

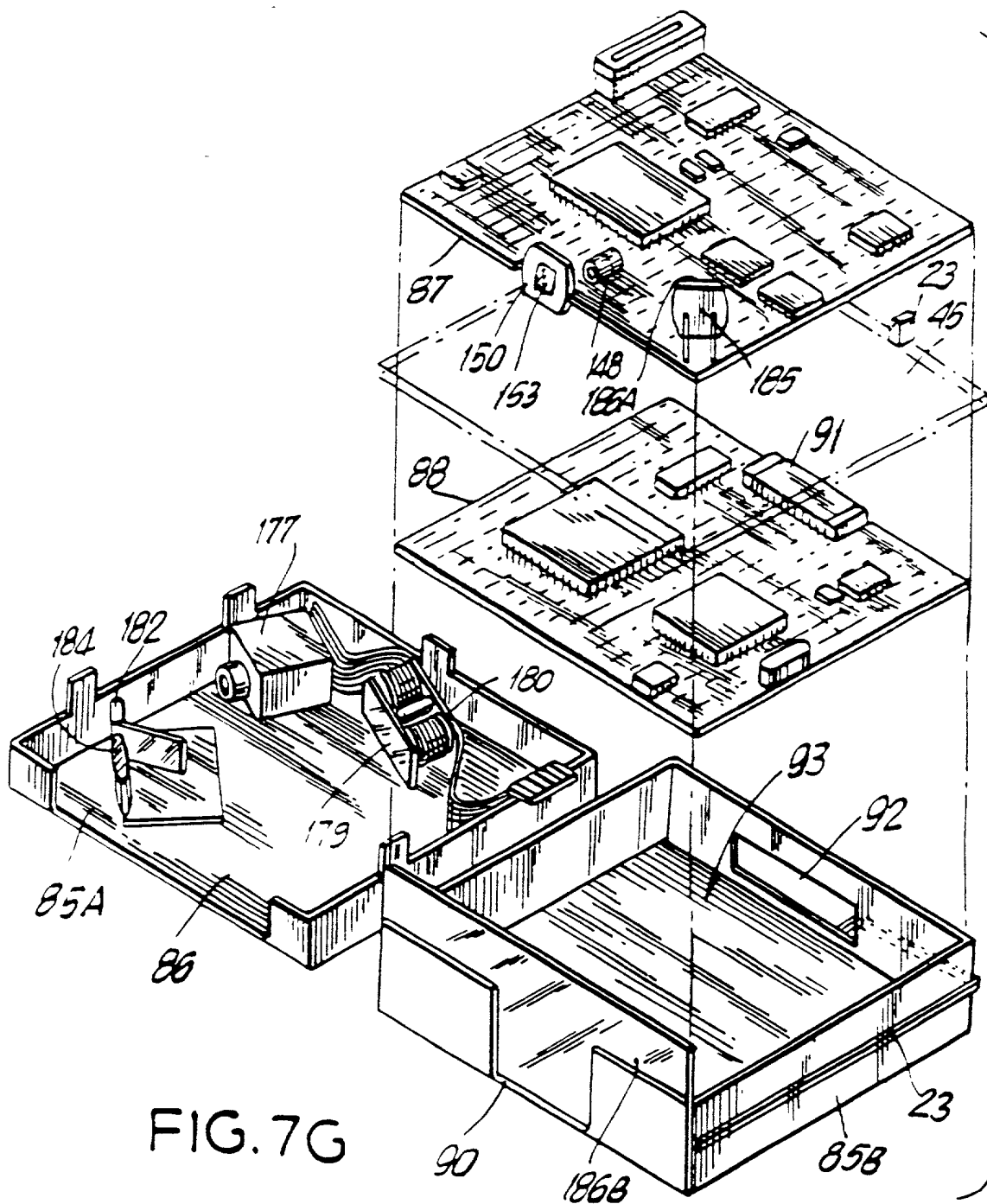


FIG. 7G

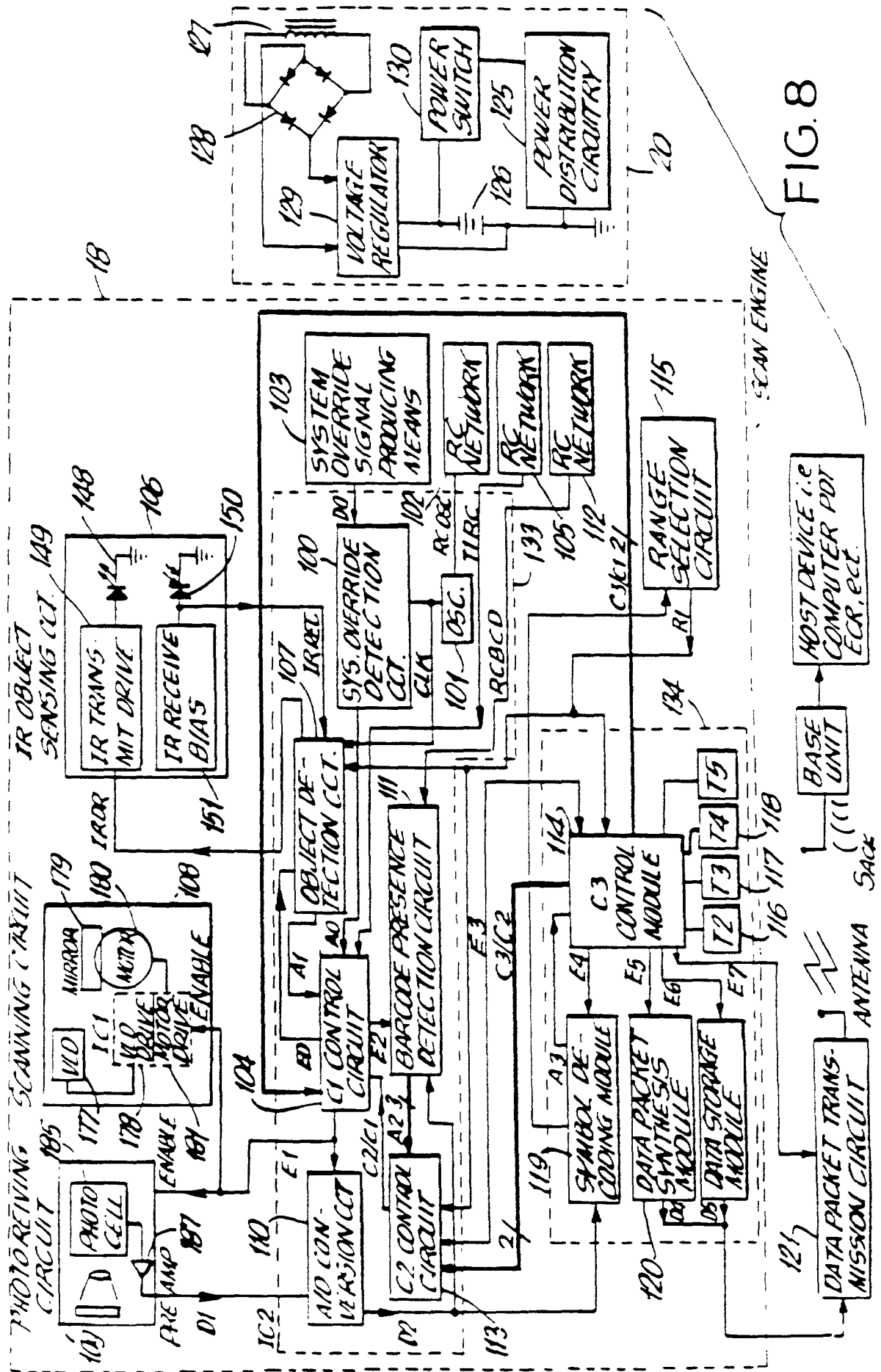


FIG. 8

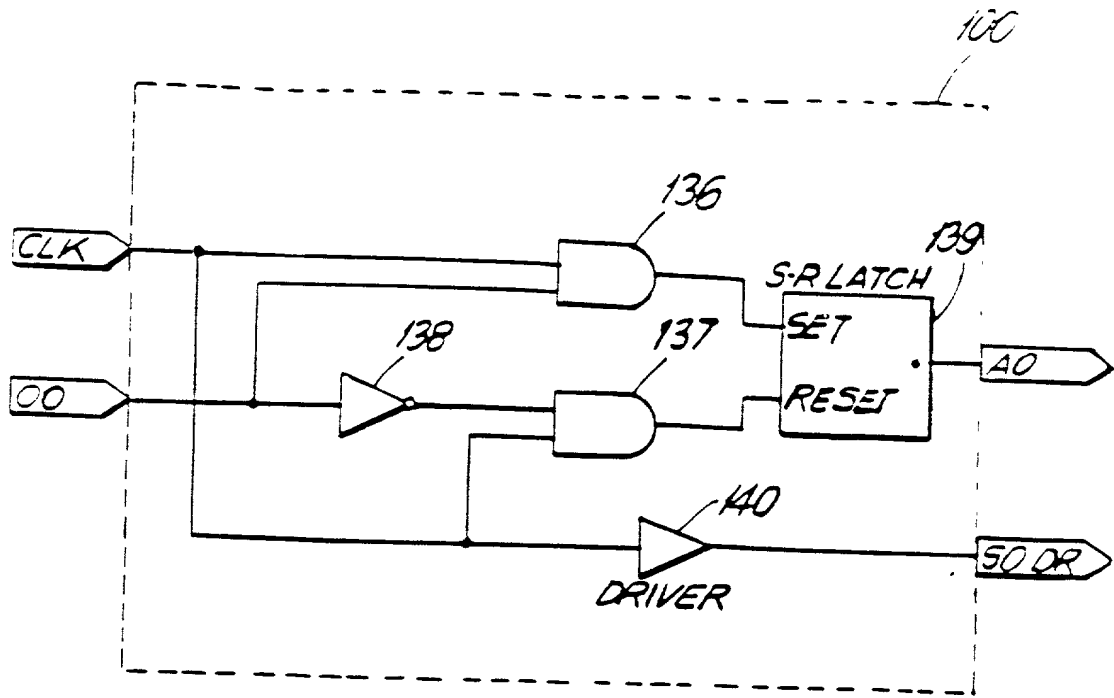


FIG. 8A

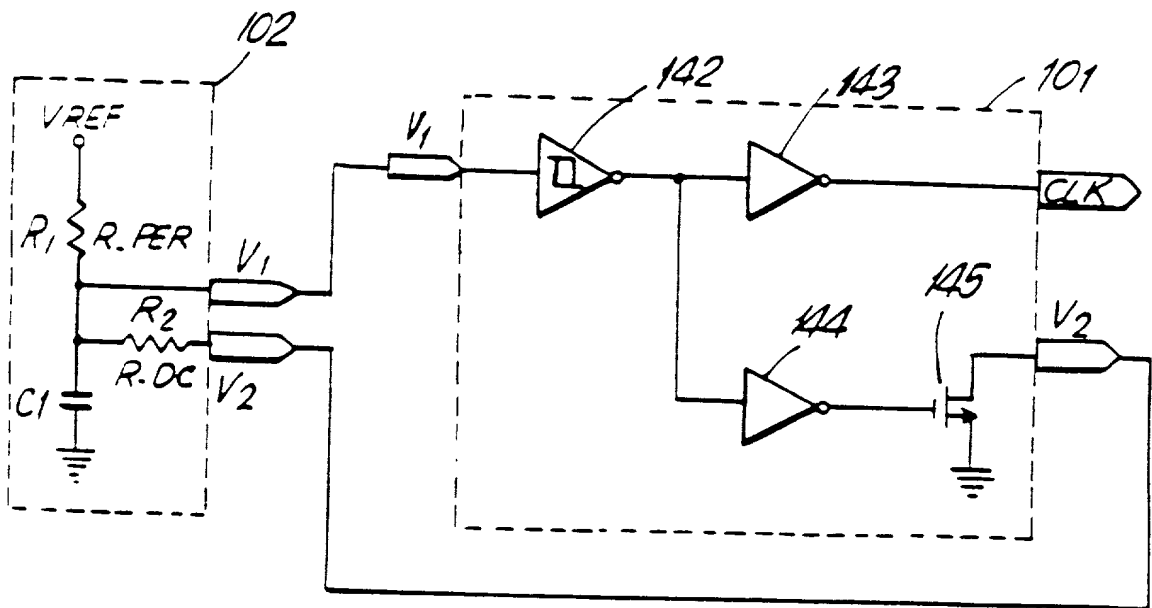


FIG. 8B

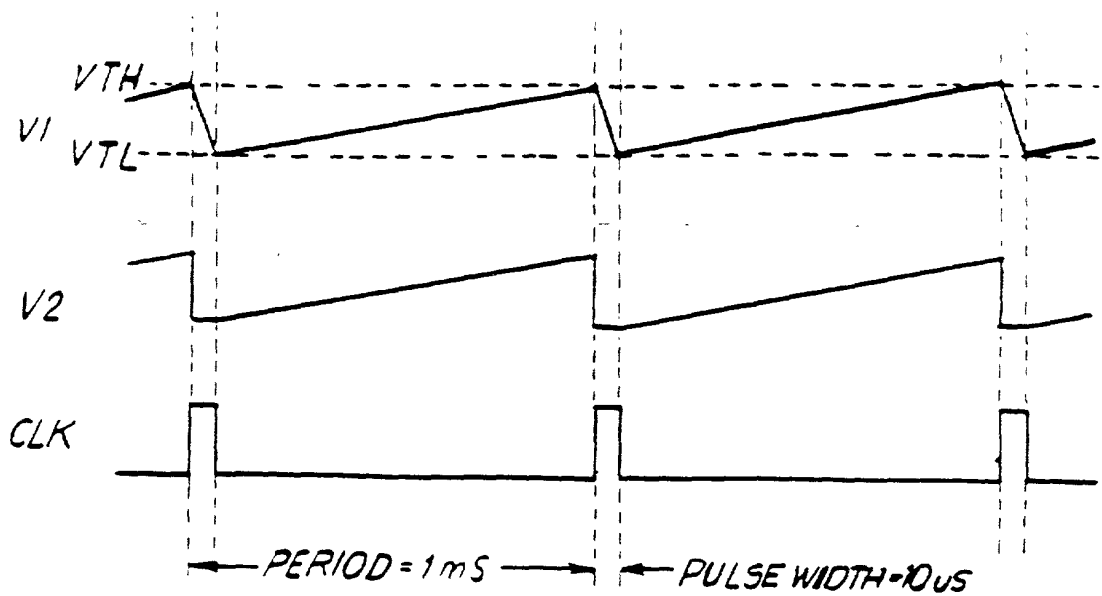


FIG.8C

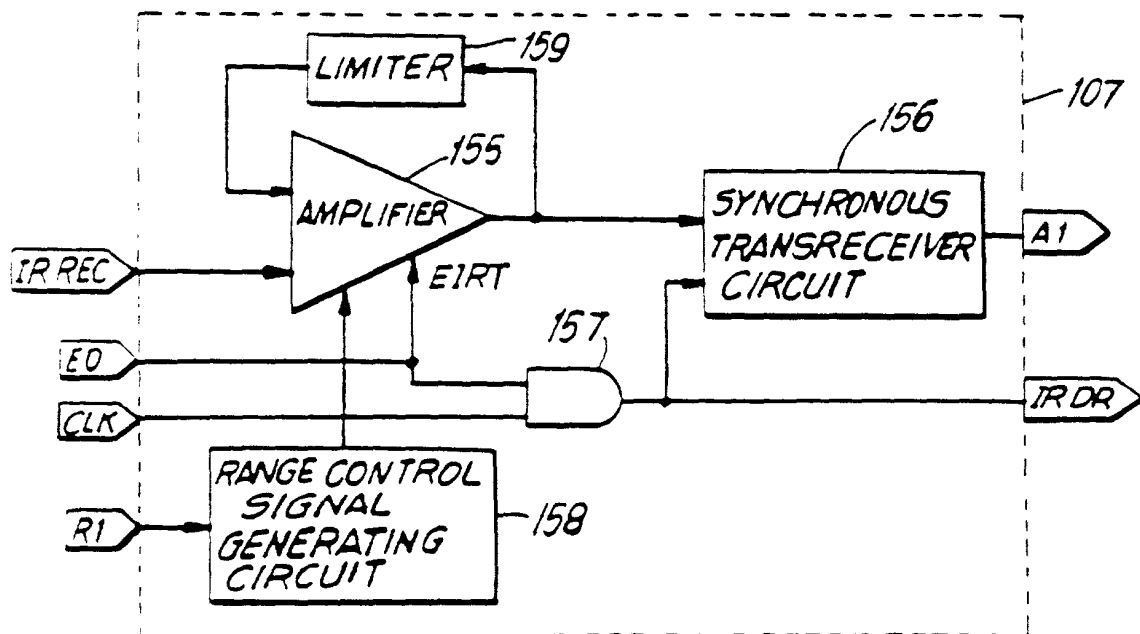
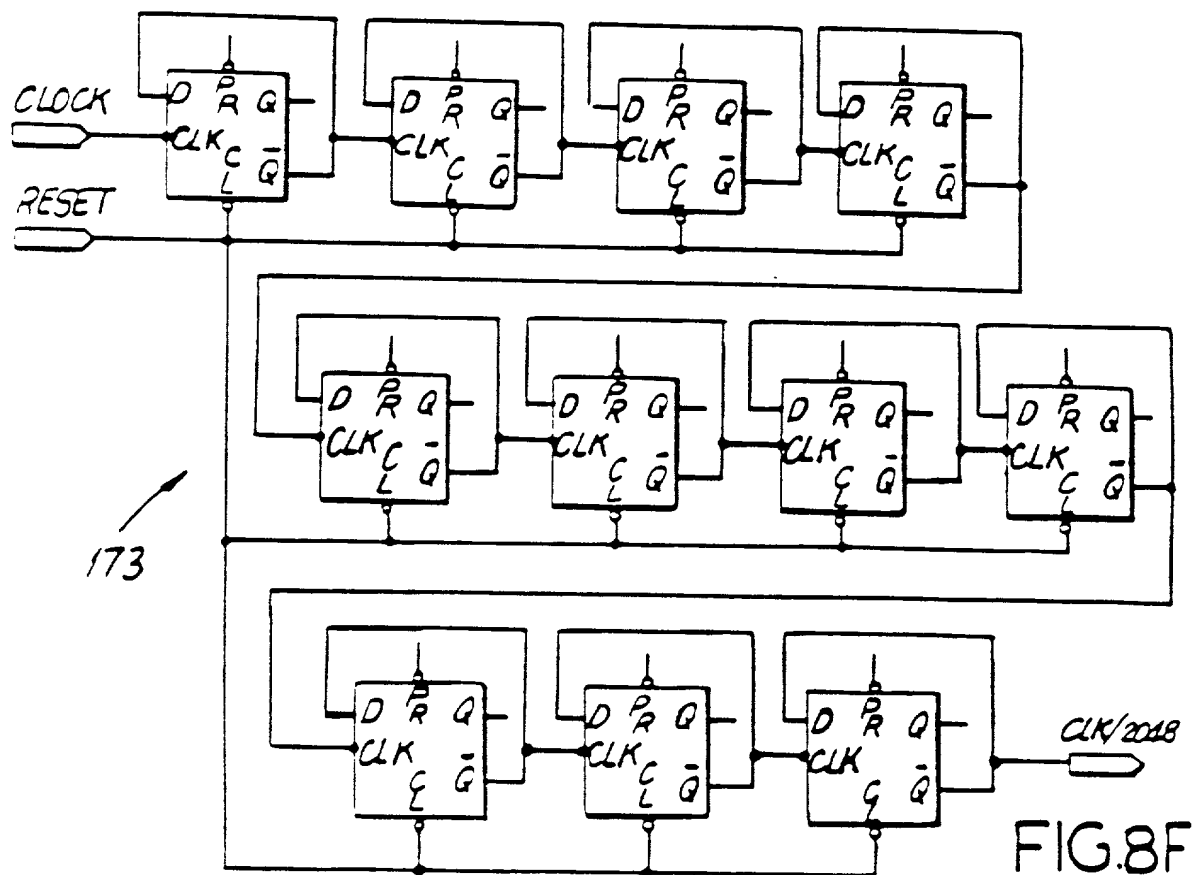
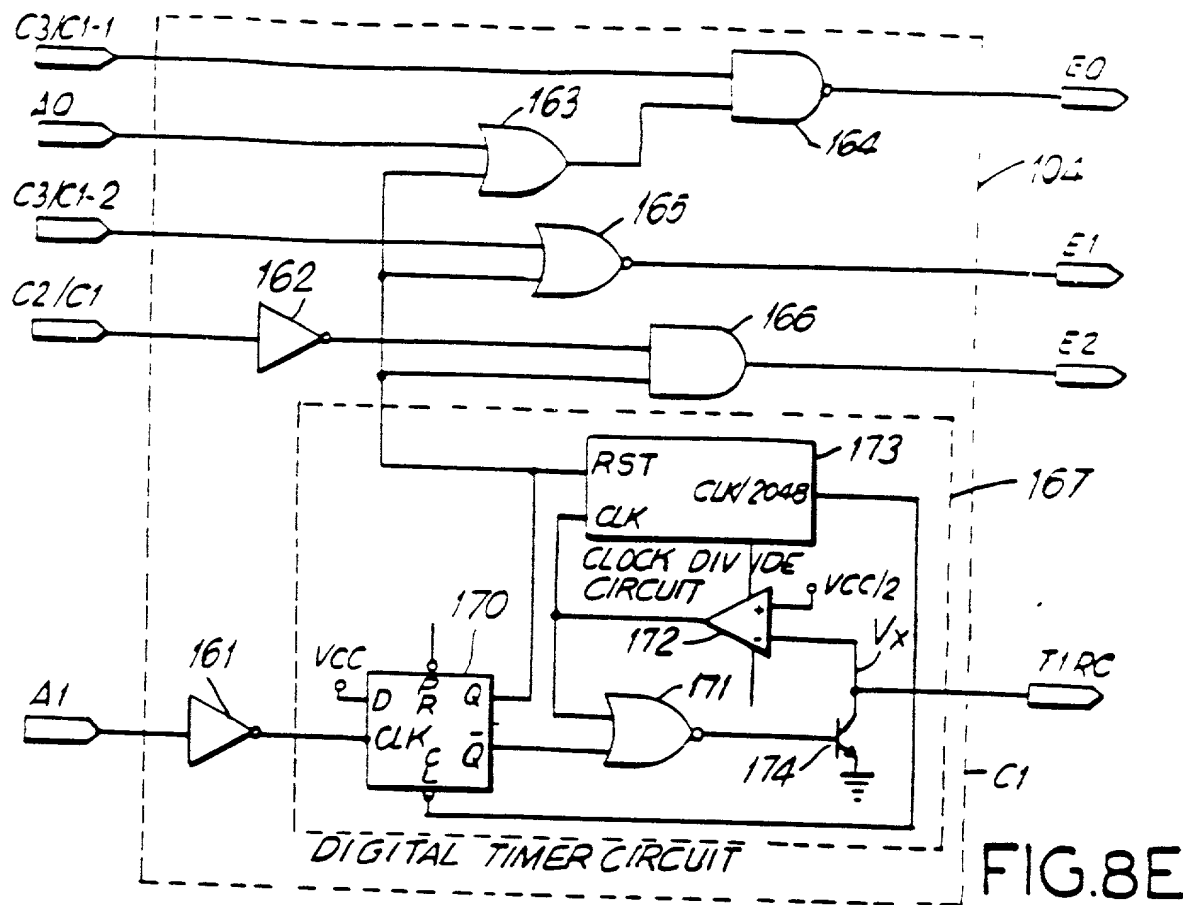


FIG.8D



$$E_0 = (B + A_0) (C_3 / C_2 - 1)$$

$$E_1 = (C_3 / C_2 - 2) + B$$

$$E_2 = (C_2 / C_1) (T_1)$$

FIG.8G

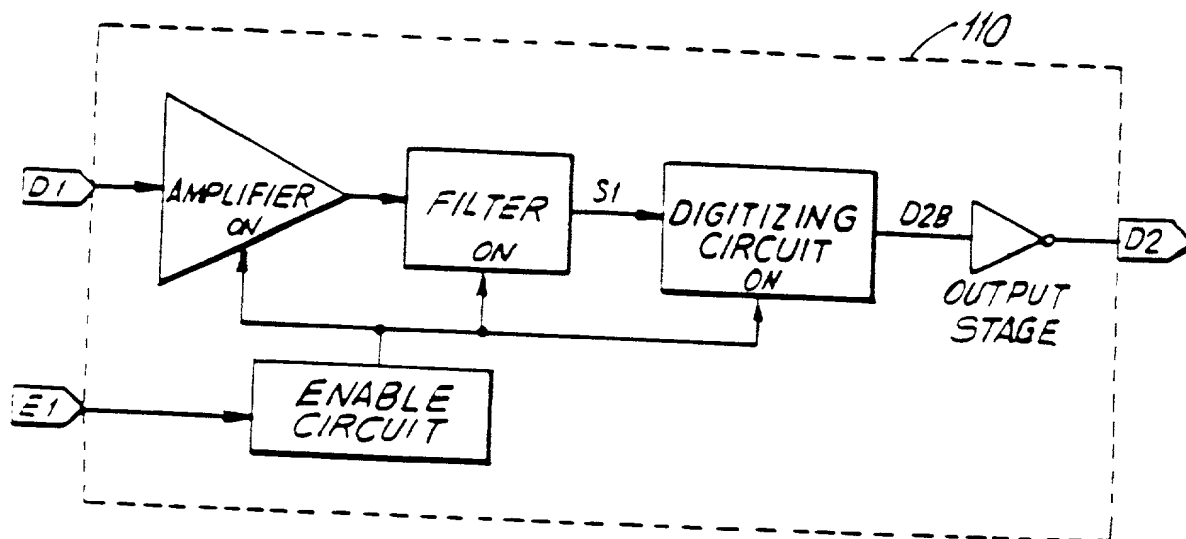


FIG.8H

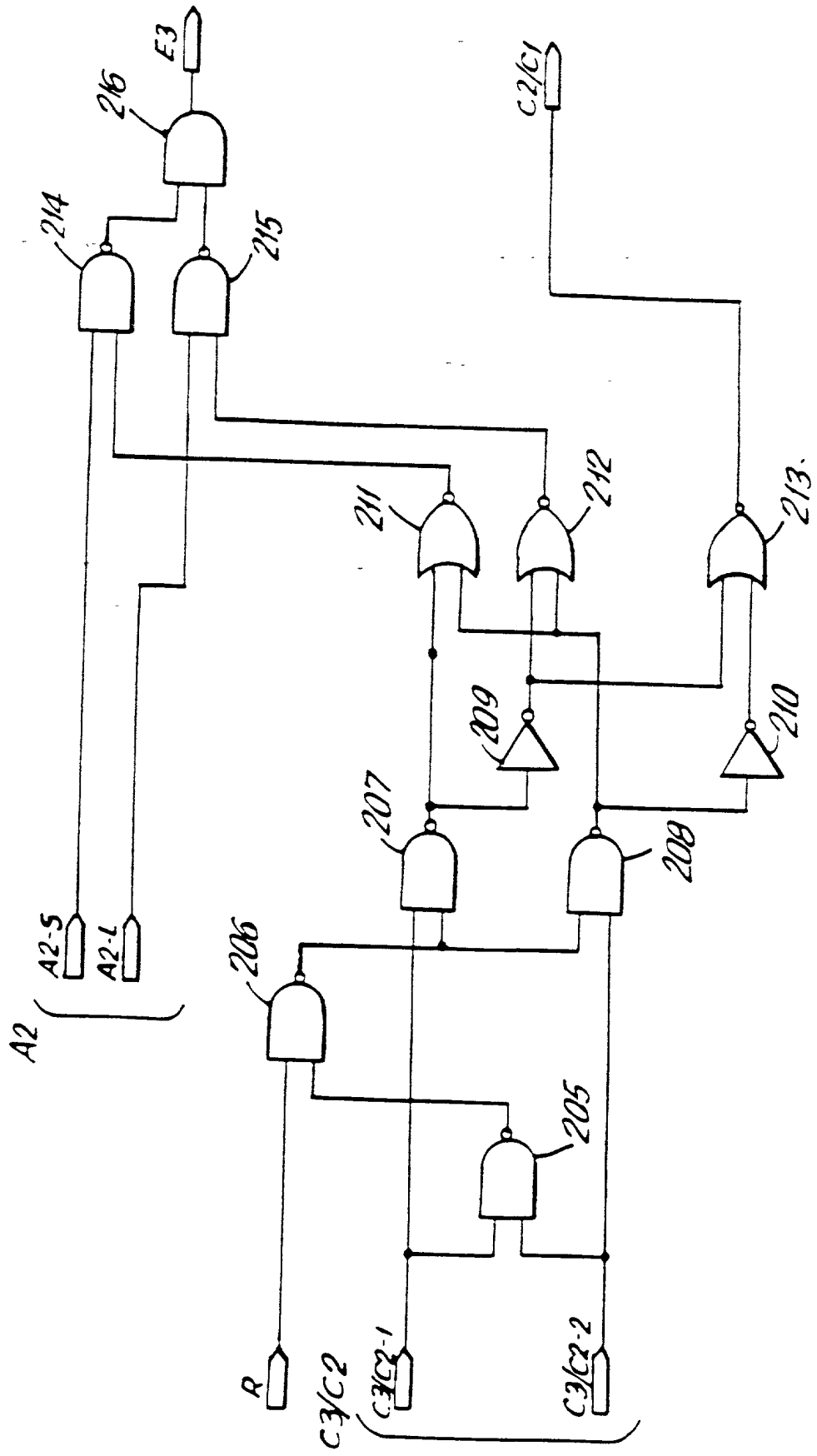


FIG. 8L

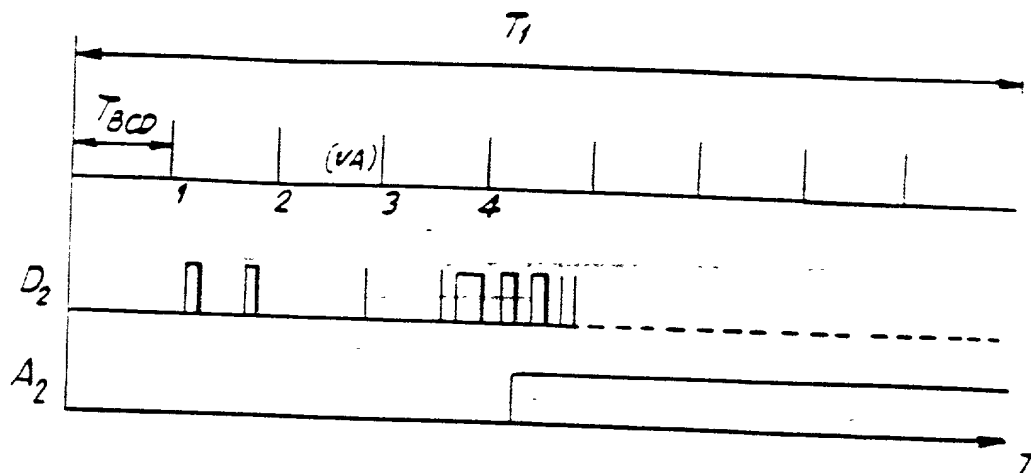


FIG. 8K

| R | C_3/C_2-1 | C_3/C_2-2 | E_3 | C_2/C_1 |
|-----|-------------|-------------|----------|-----------|
| 0 | X | X | A_{2L} | 0 |
| 1 | 0 | 0 | A_{2L} | 0 |
| 1 | 0 | 1 | A_{2S} | 0 |
| X | 1 | 1 | X | 1 |

X = DON'T CARE

FIG. 8M

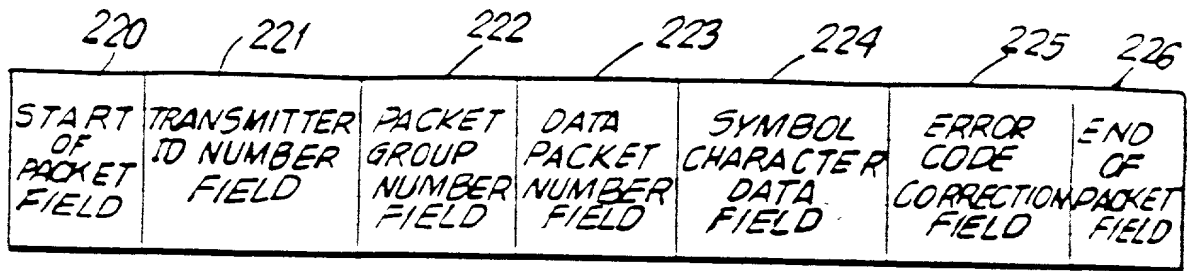


FIG.8N

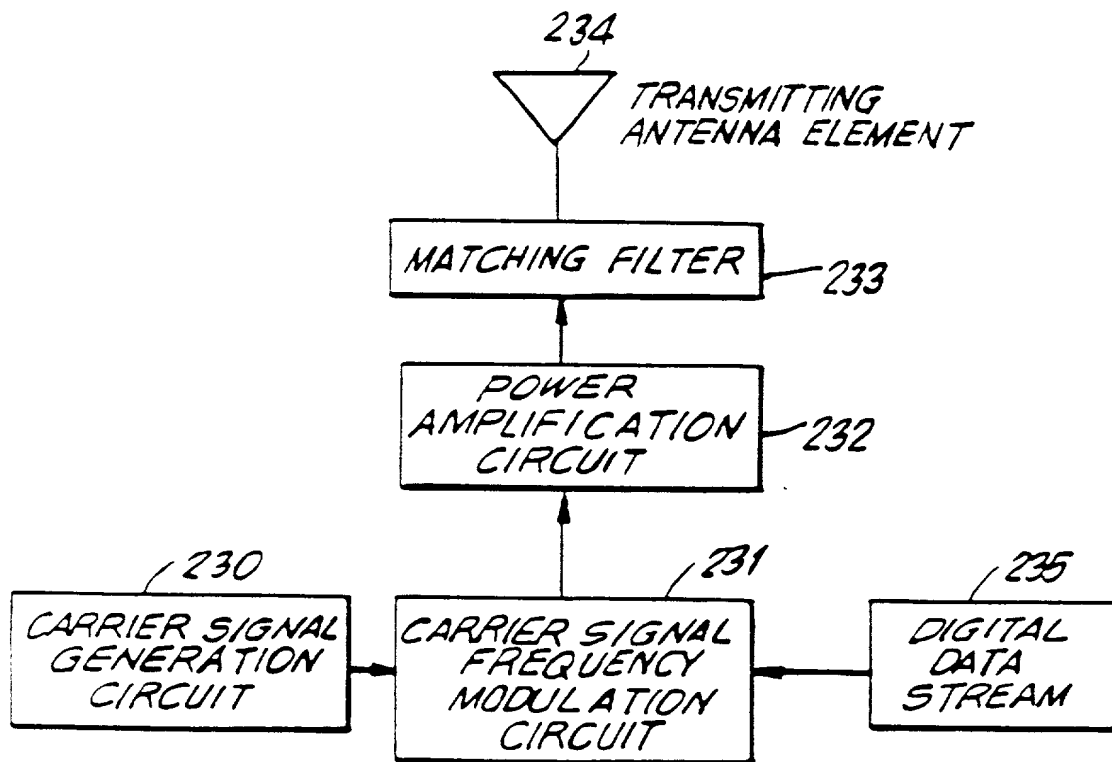


FIG.9

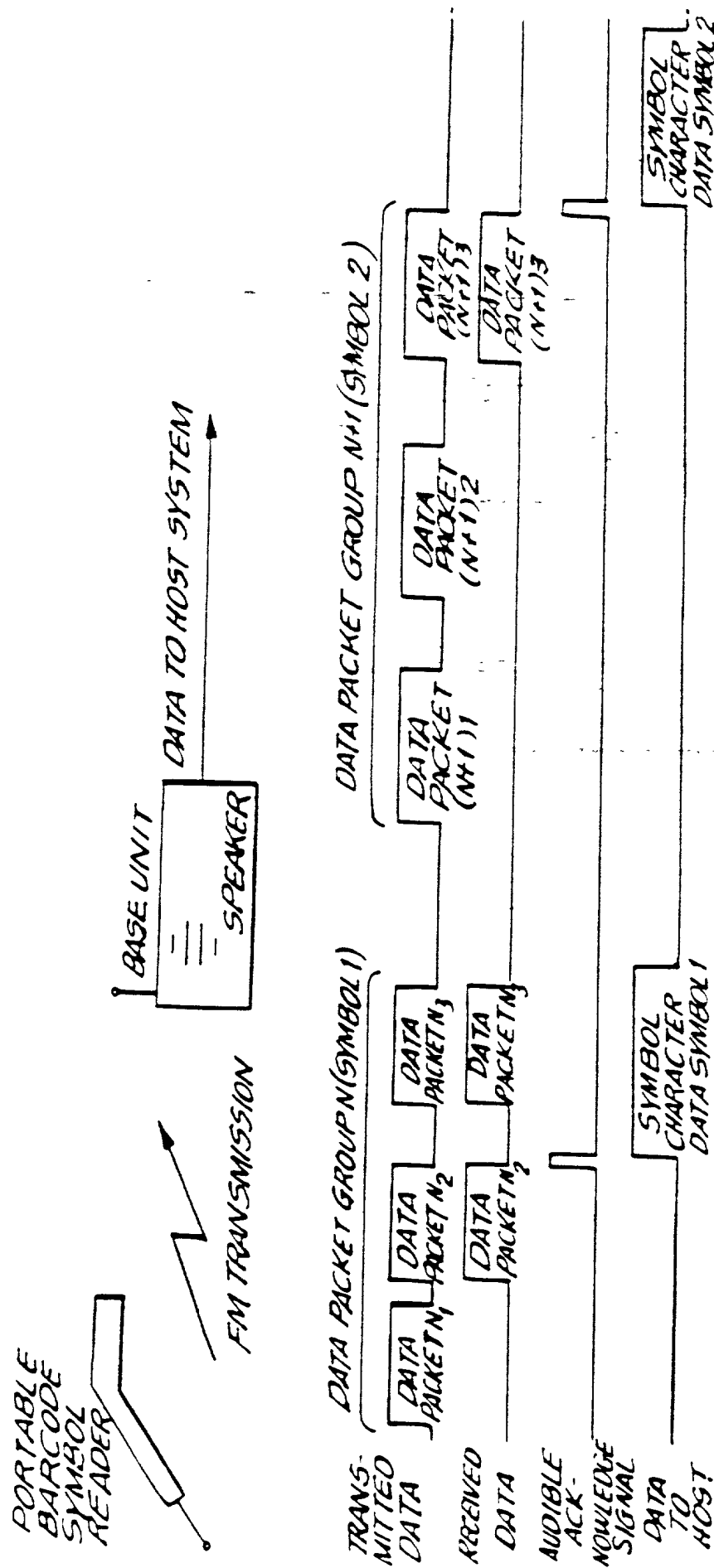


FIG. 10

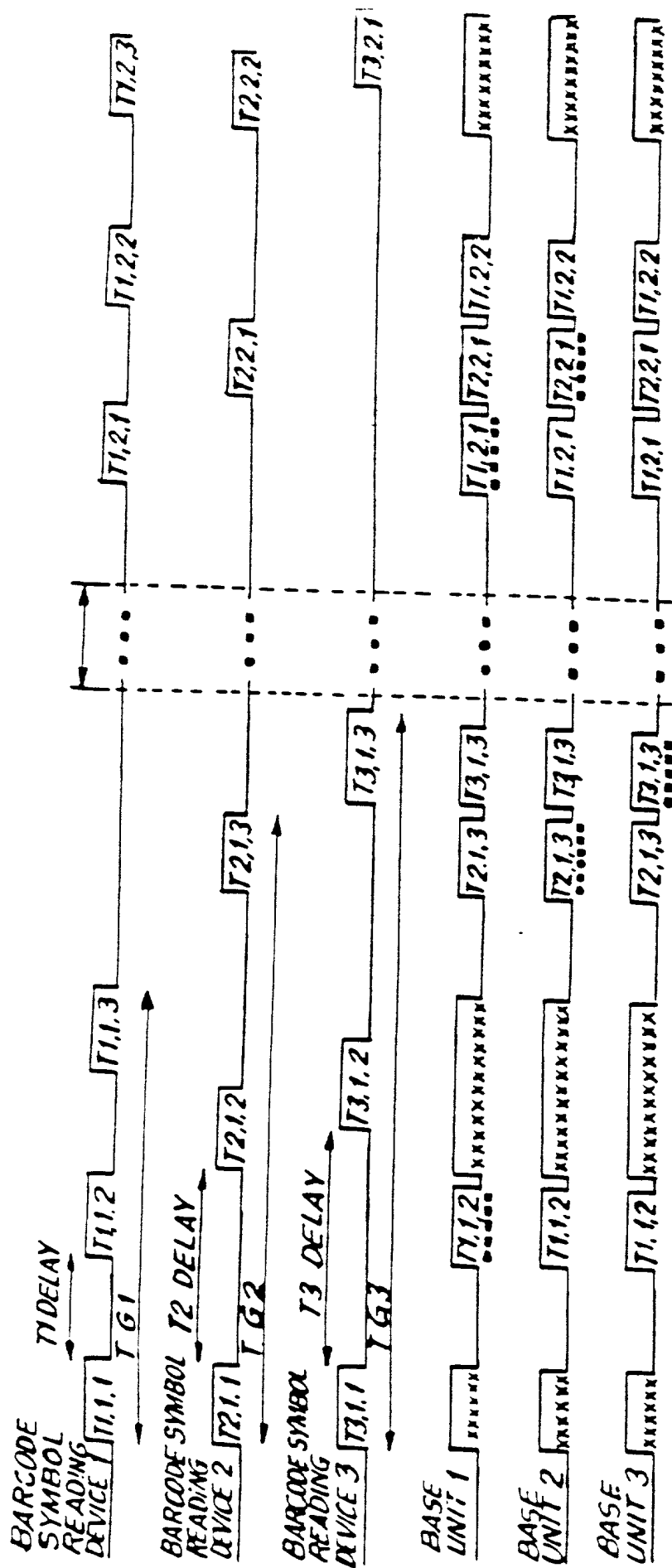


FIG.12

DATA PACKET NOTATION:
TRANSMITTER #, GROUP #, TRANSMITTERS *

xxx DENOTES INTERFERENCE FROM MULTIPLE TRANSMITTERS
..... DENOTES DATA THAT WILL PRODUCE ACKNOWLEDGE

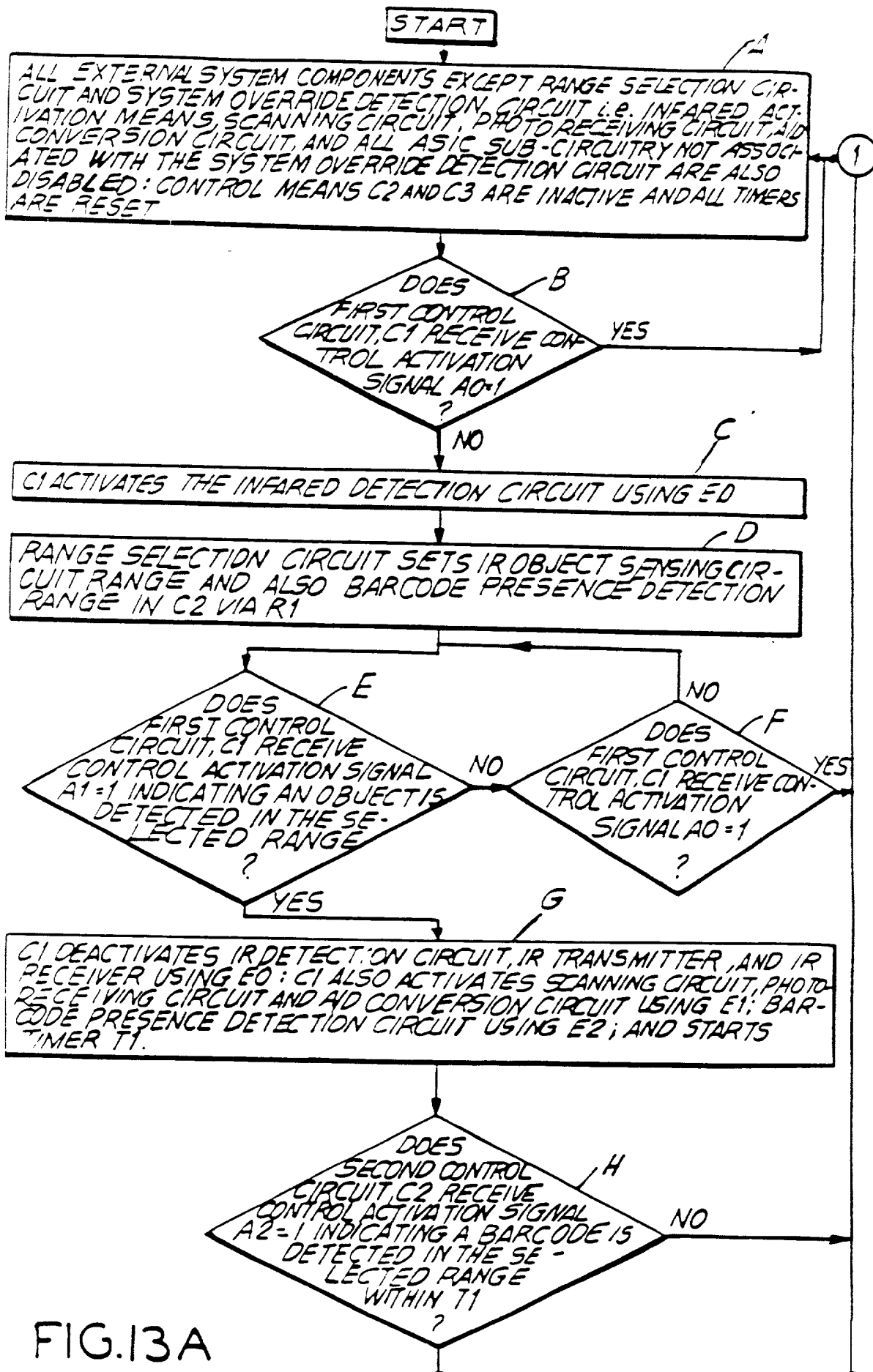


FIG.13A

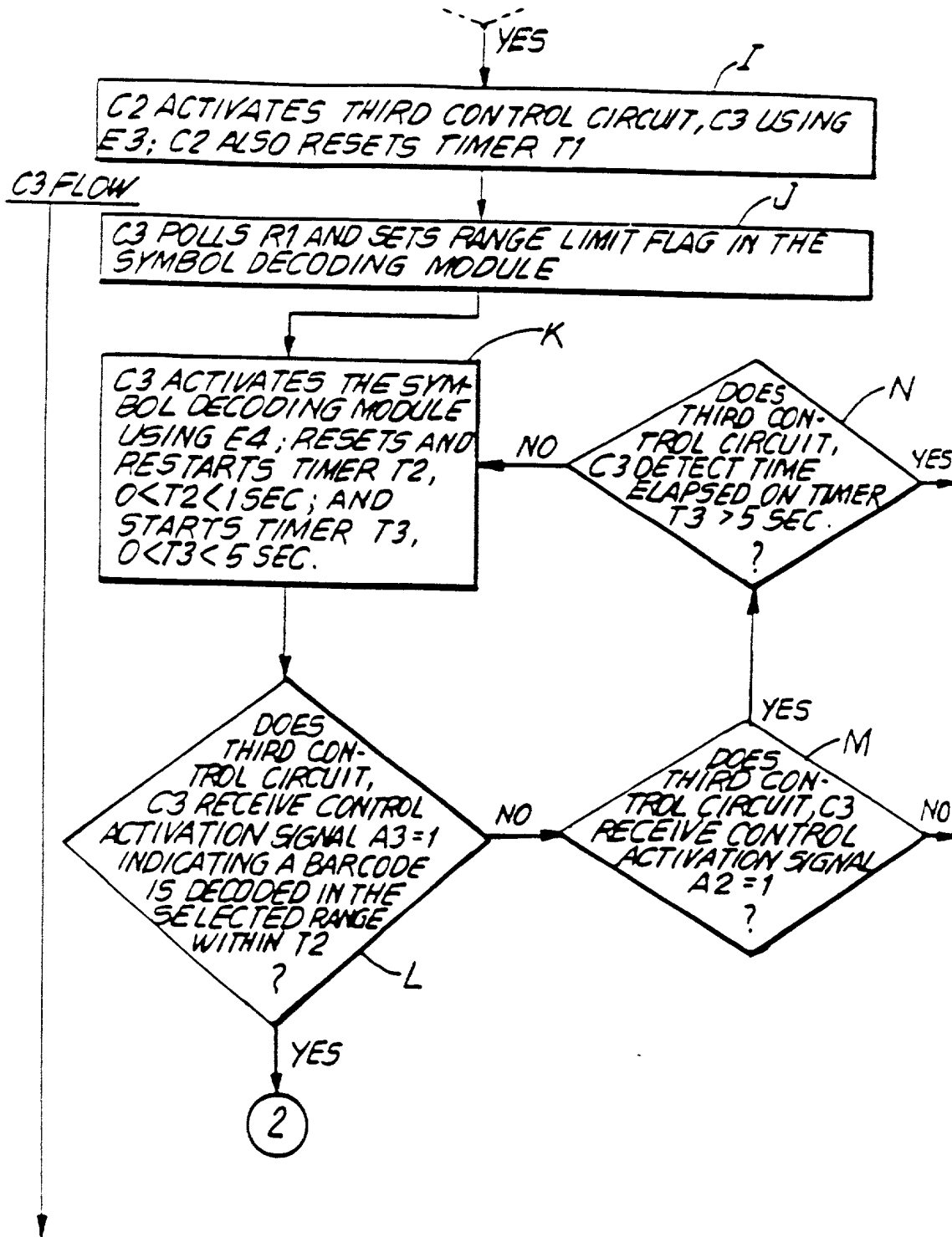


FIG.13AA

C3 FLOW

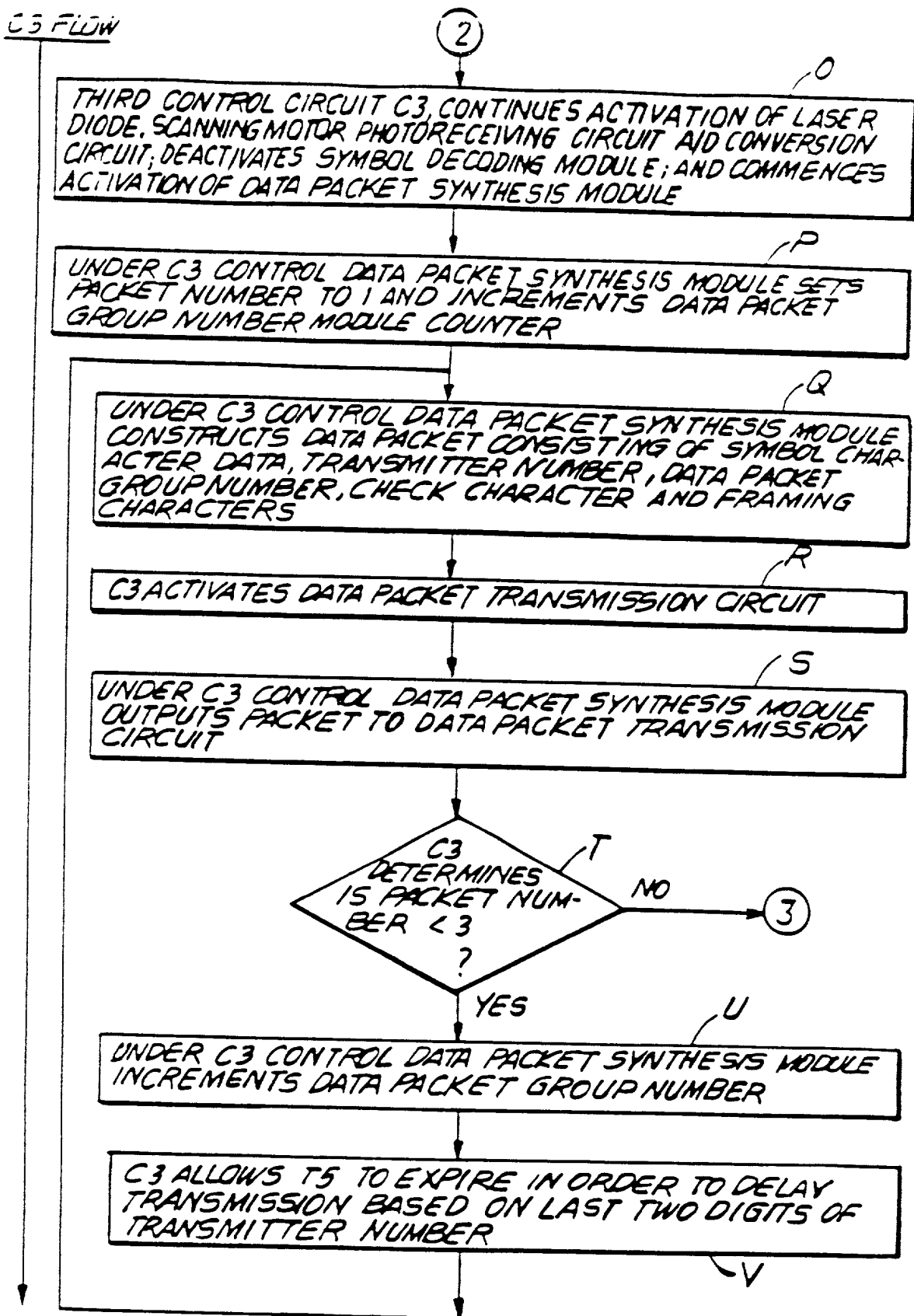


FIG.13B

C3 FLOW

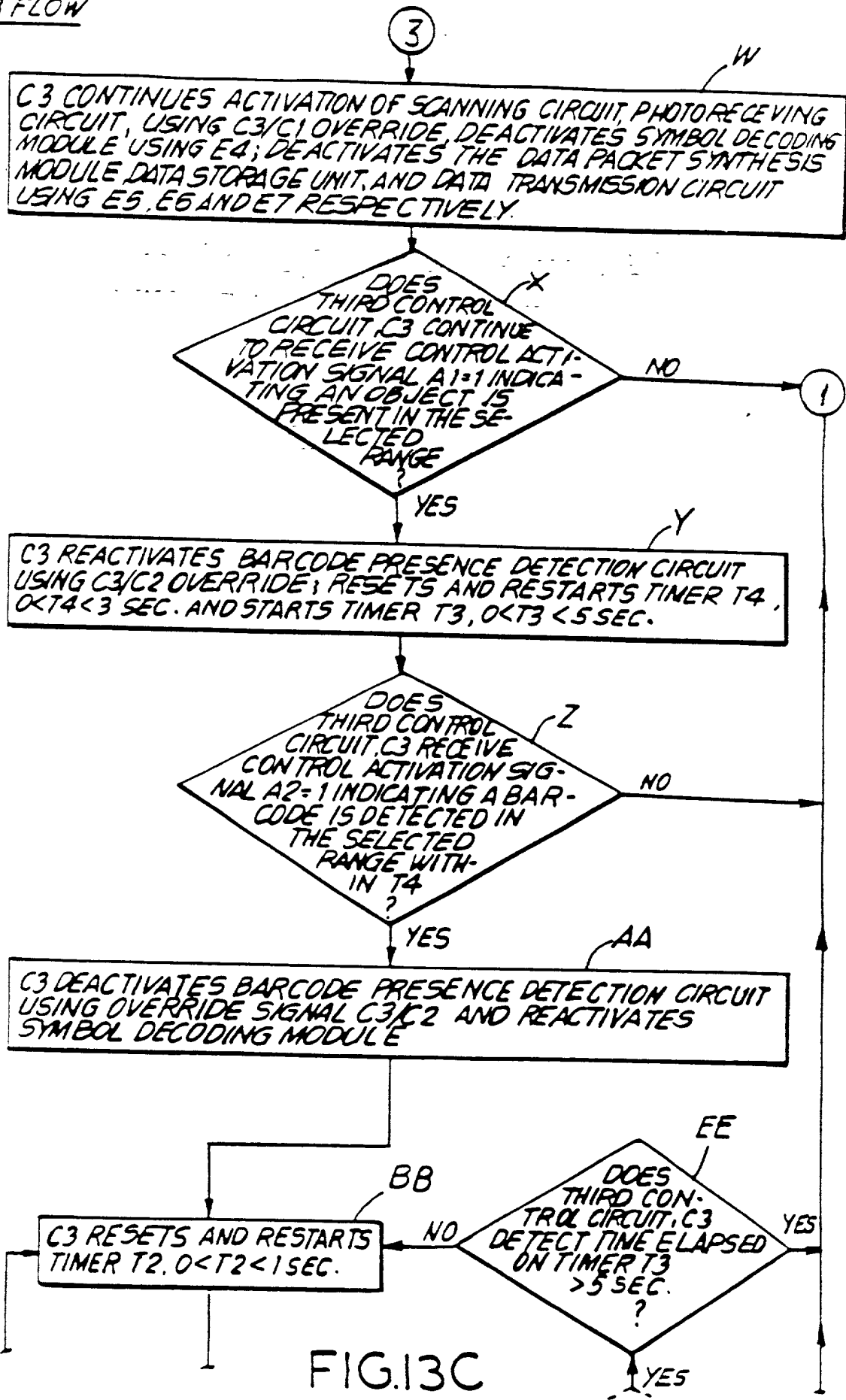


FIG.13C

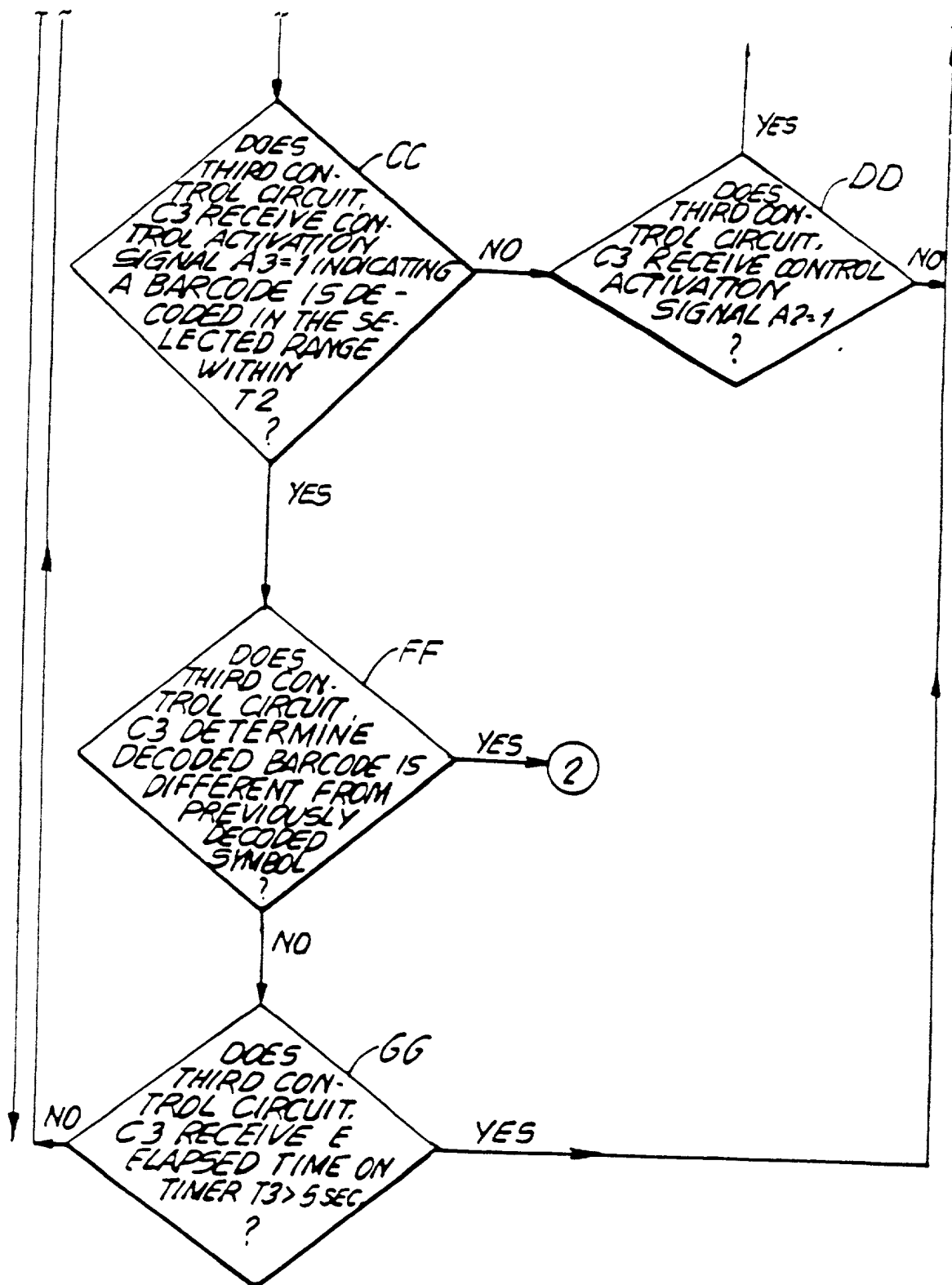


FIG. 13CC

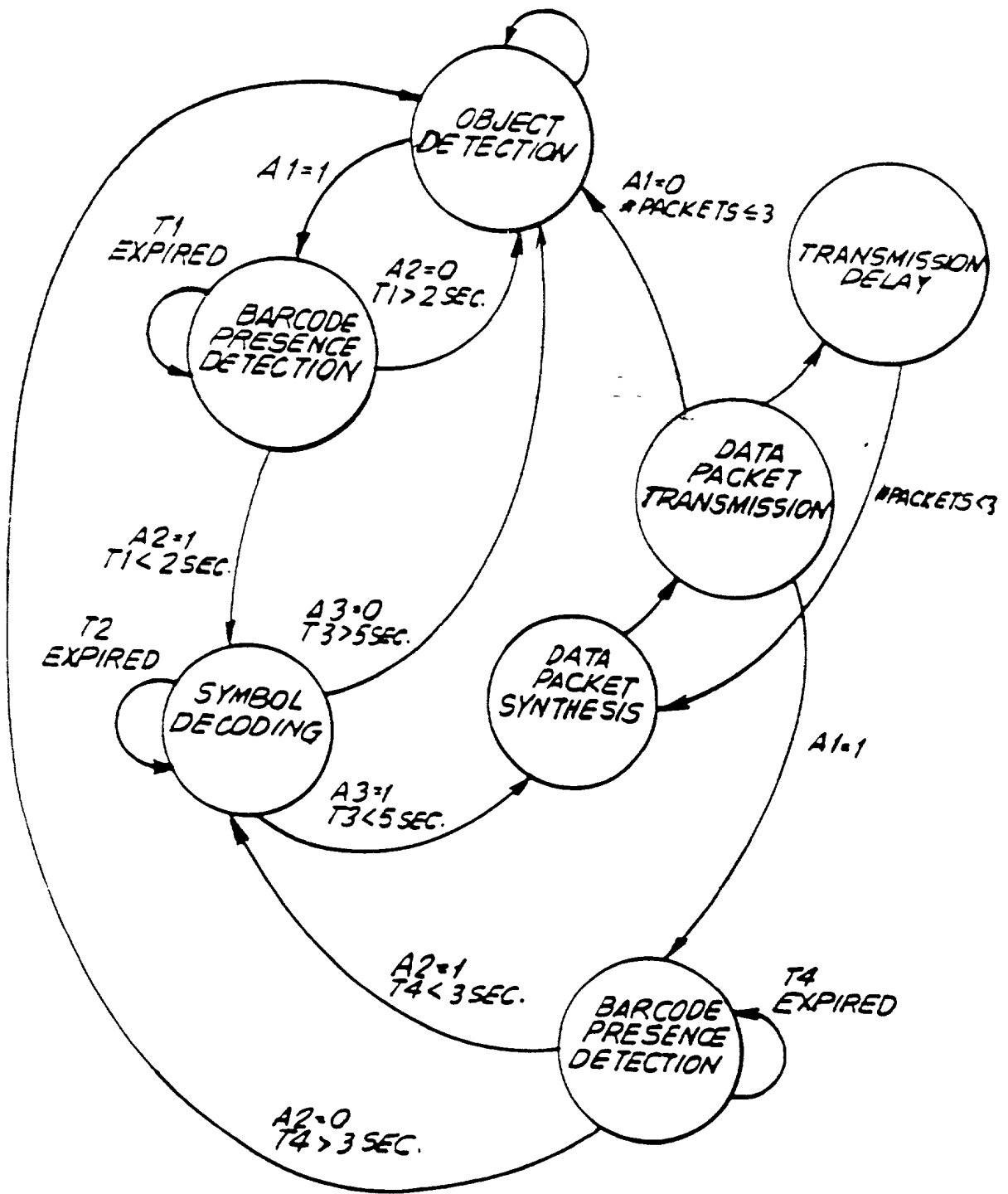
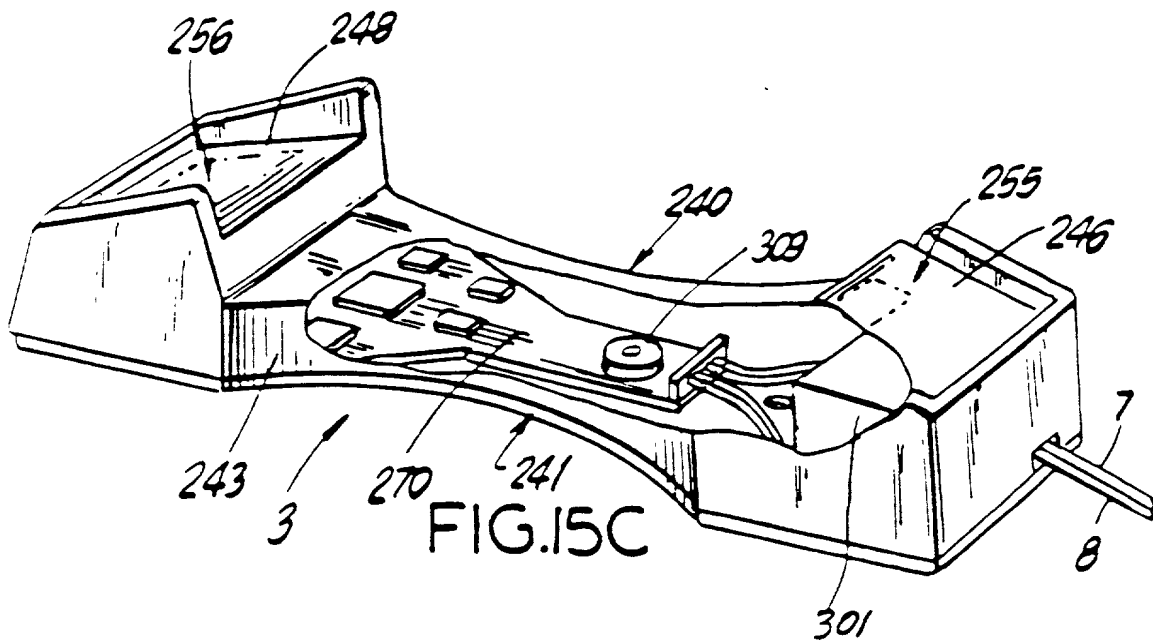
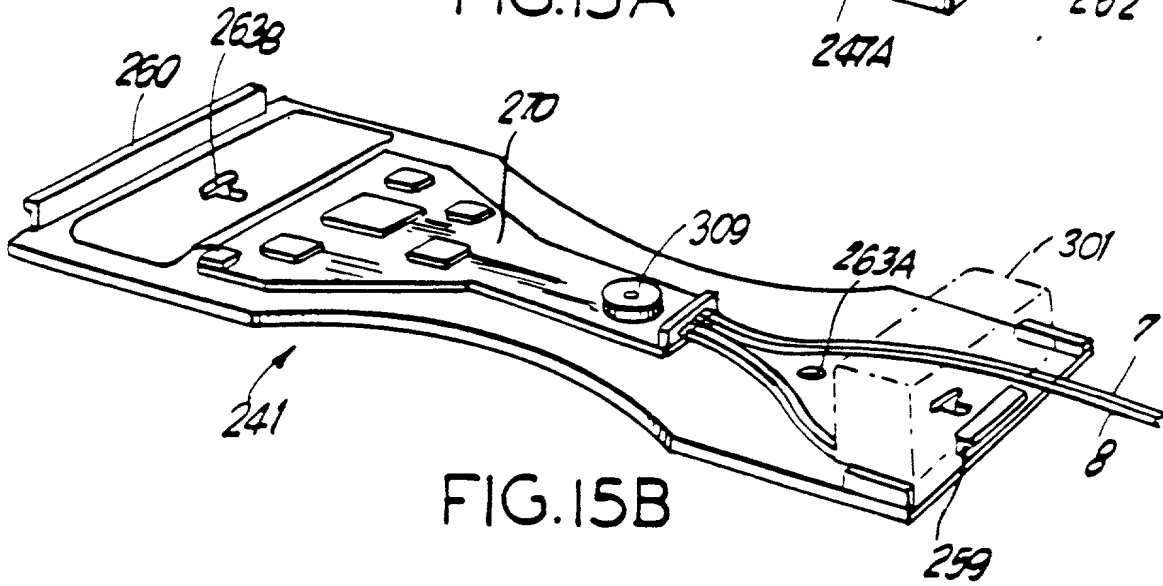
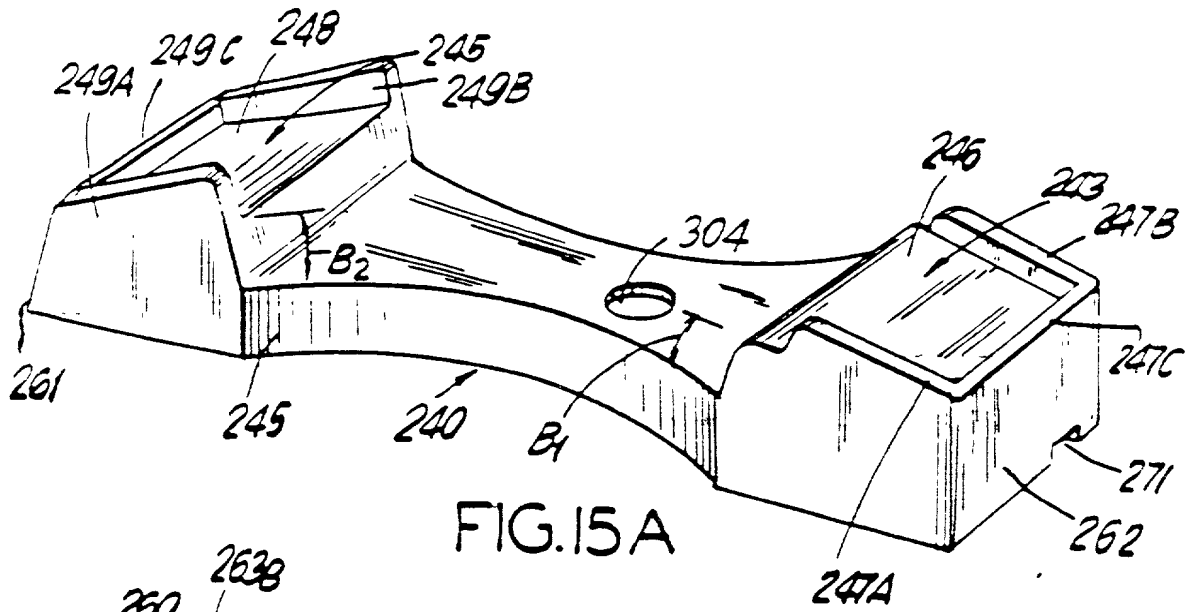


FIG.14



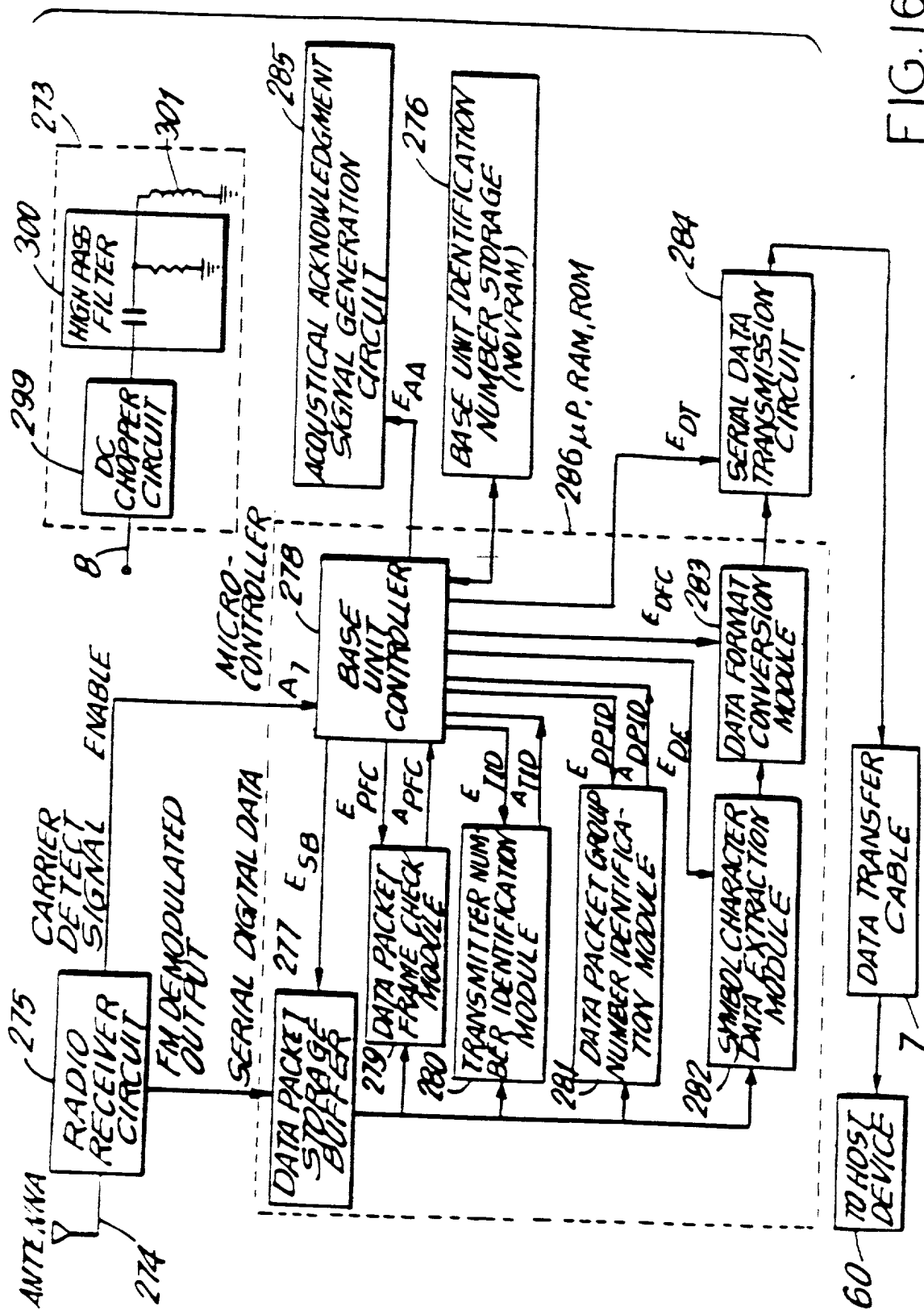


FIG. 16

FIG. 16A is a block diagram of a receiver system. The system includes an antenna 274, a matching filter 287, a low noise amplifier 289, a double balanced mixer 290, a matching filter 291, a local oscillator 292, a carrier detect amplifier 297, a binary threshold circuit 296, a data amplifier 298, an FM demodulator 295, and a filter 294. The system is labeled IF 10.1 MHz.

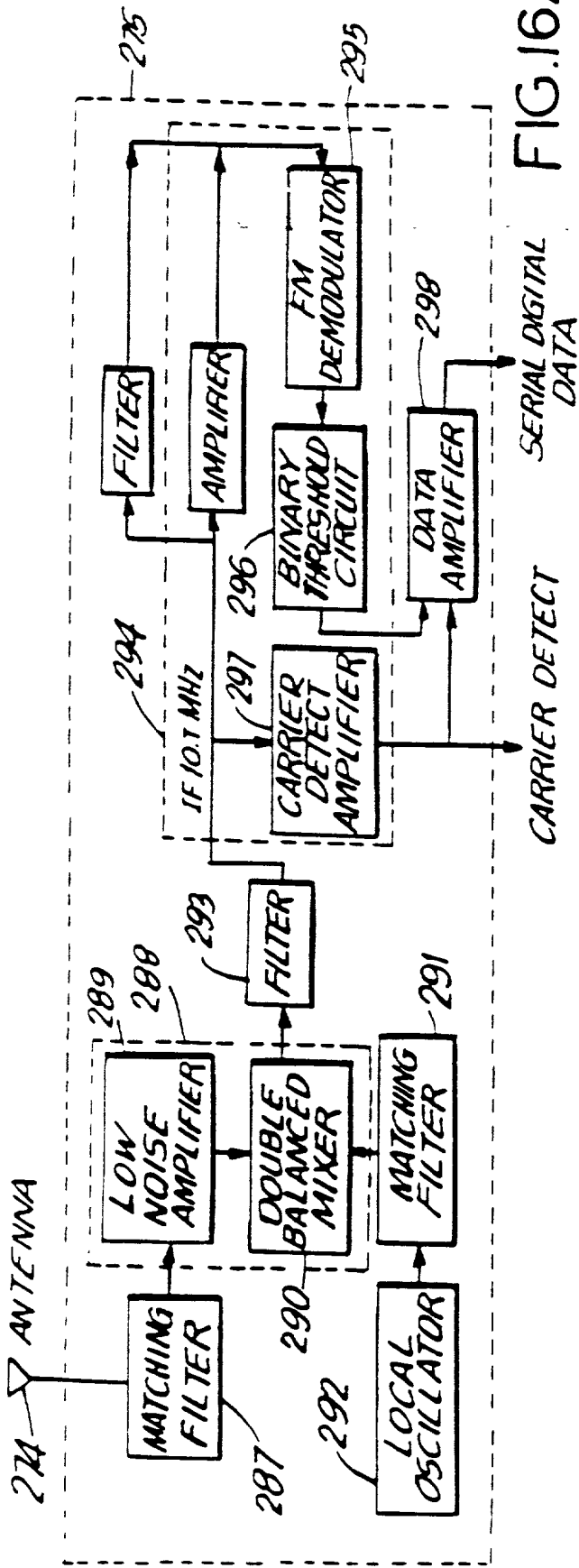


FIG. 16A

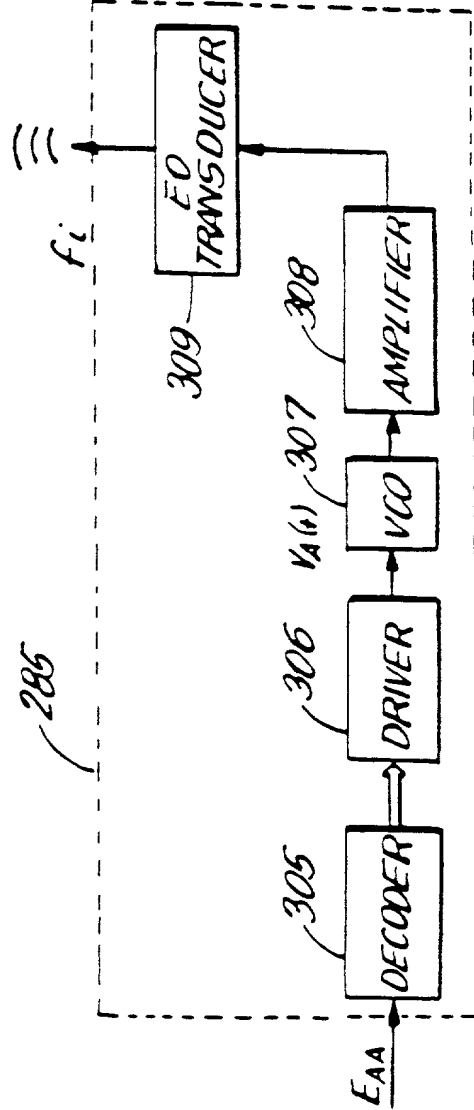


FIG. 16B

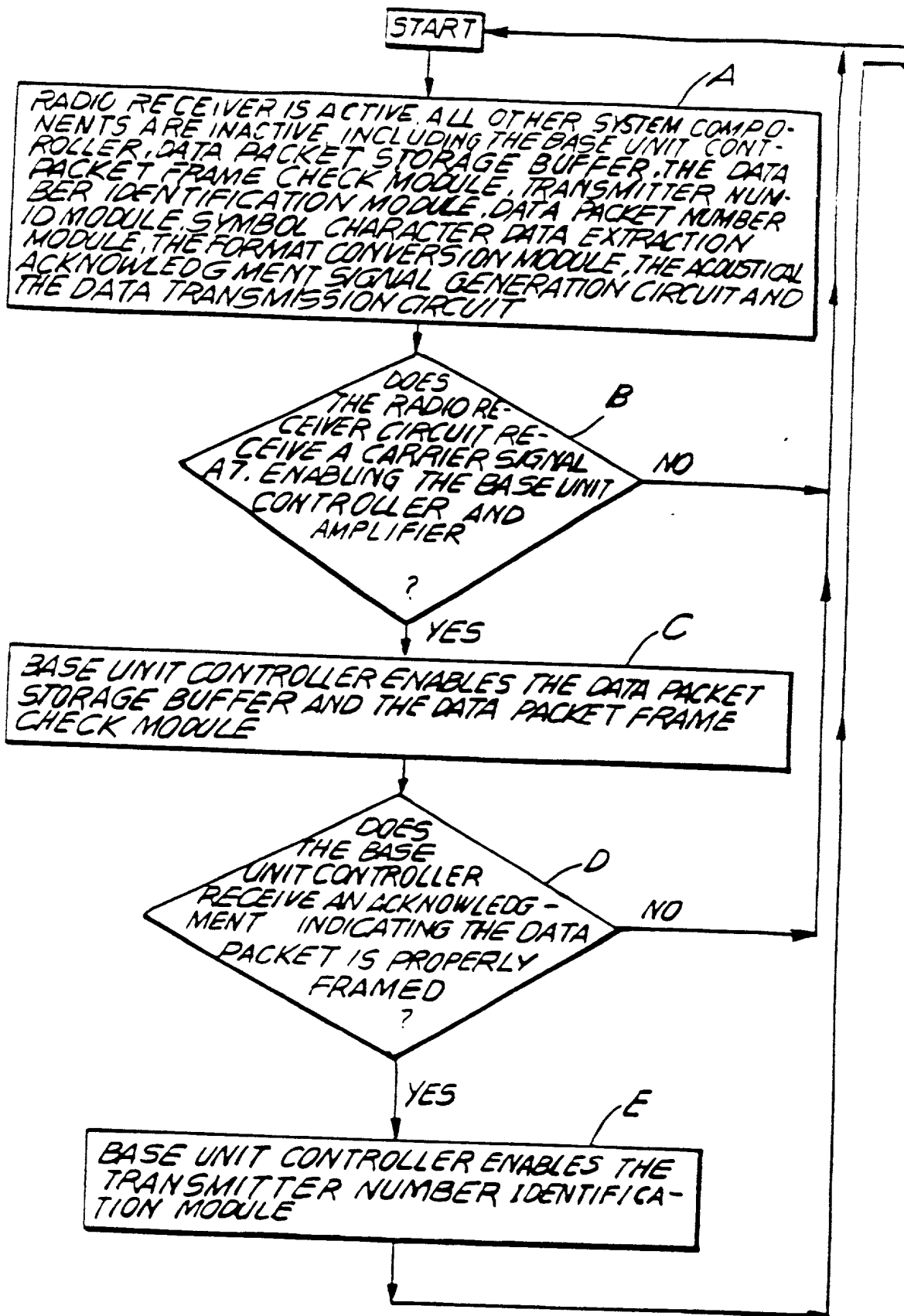


FIG.17

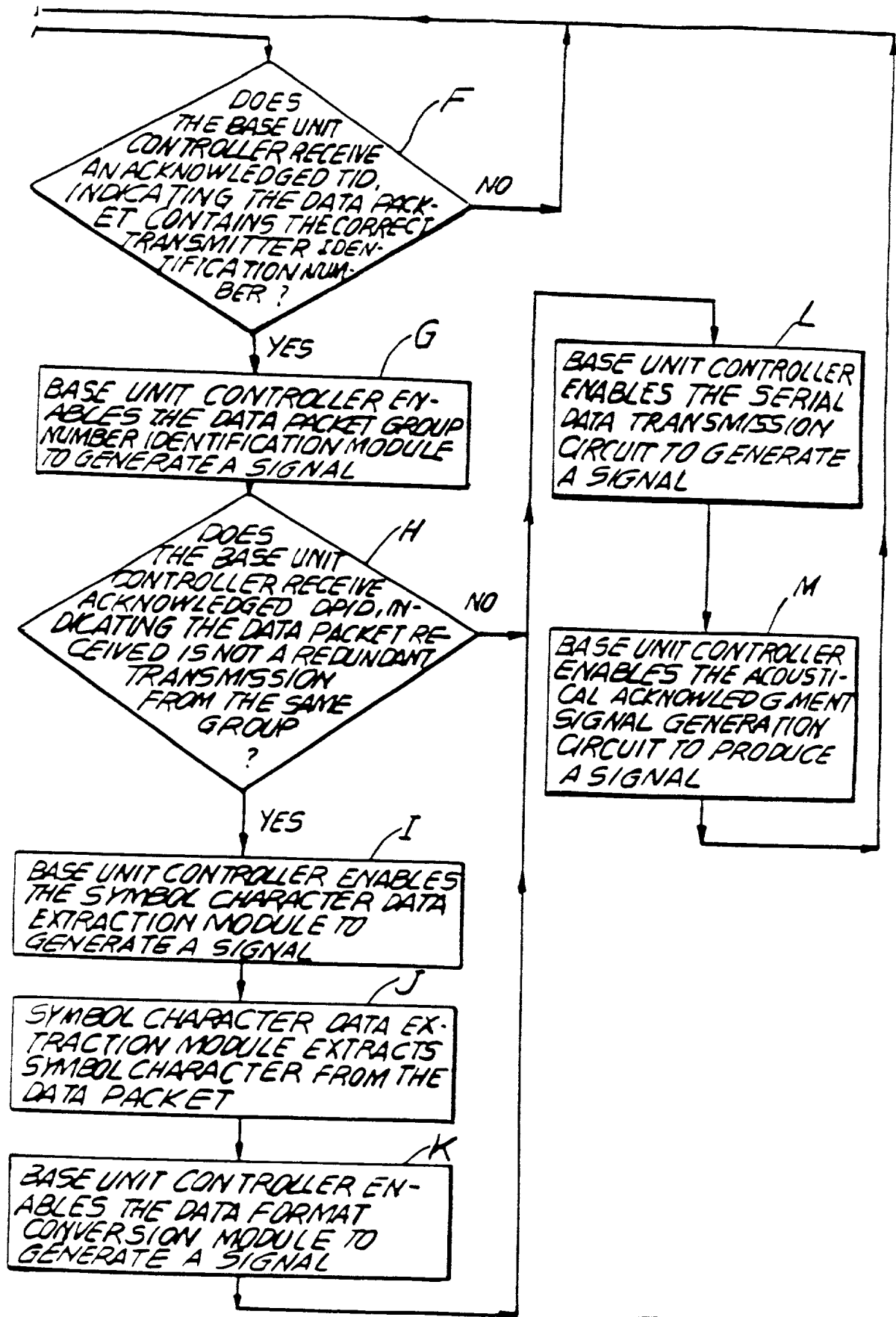


FIG. 17A

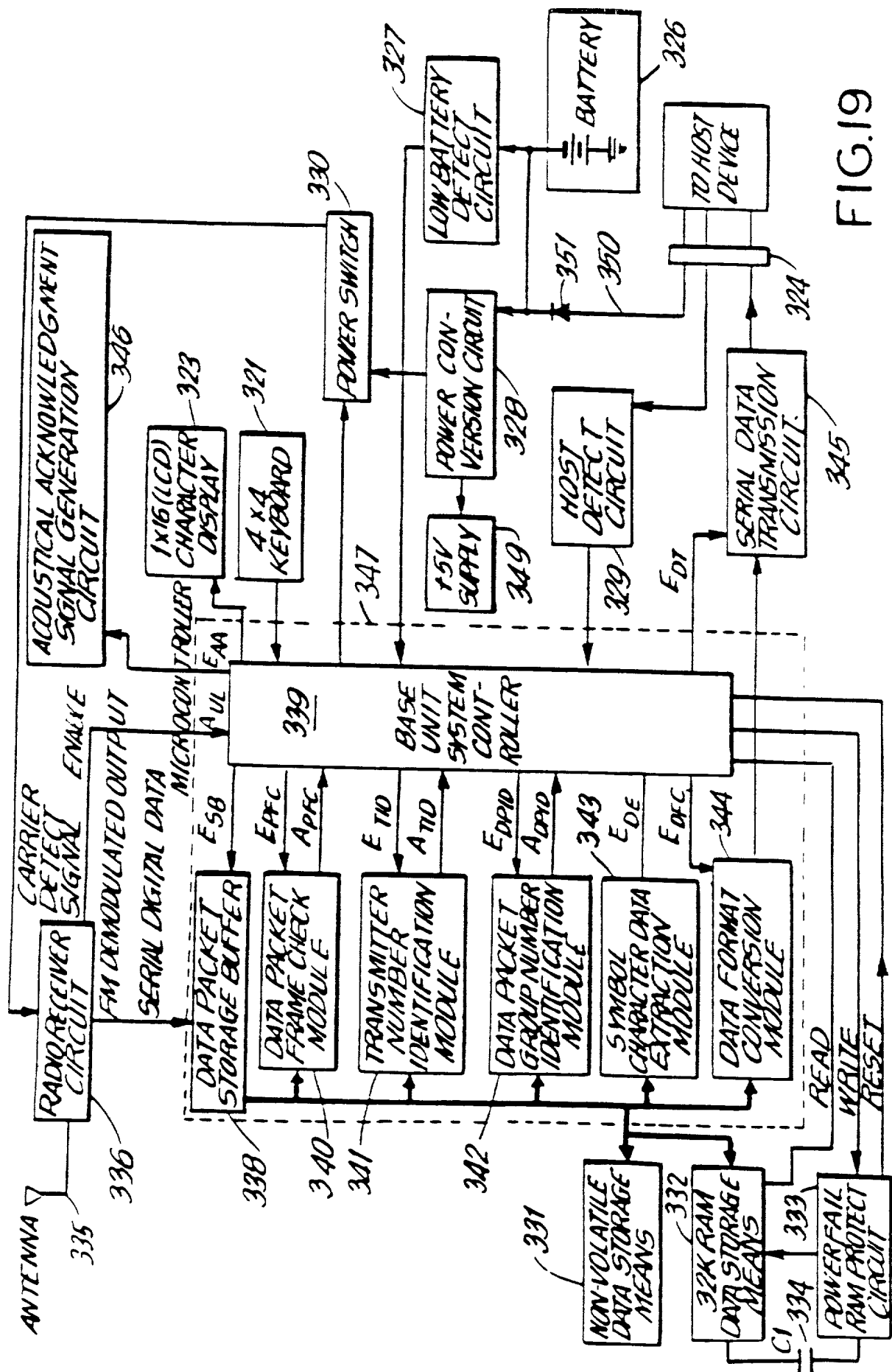


FIG. 20A is a flowchart illustrating a sequence of operations for a device, starting with a POWER ON/RESET event. The process involves checking the output of a host detect circuit (A), checking for low battery (N), and checking for low batteries (P). It then proceeds to turn off the receiver via a power switch circuit (B) and check for stored data in the RAM (C). If data is present, it writes to the COM HIT ENTER to display (F) and polls the keypad for keypress (G). If a key is pressed (H), it checks if the enter key has been pressed (I). If yes, it loops back to the host detect circuit check (Q). If no, it loops back to the keypad poll (G). If no data is stored, it loops back to the host detect circuit check (Q). If the host detect circuit output is low (P), it writes low batteries to display and checks the output of the host detect circuit (Q). If yes, it loops back to the host detect circuit check (Q). If no, it loops back to the host detect circuit check (Q).

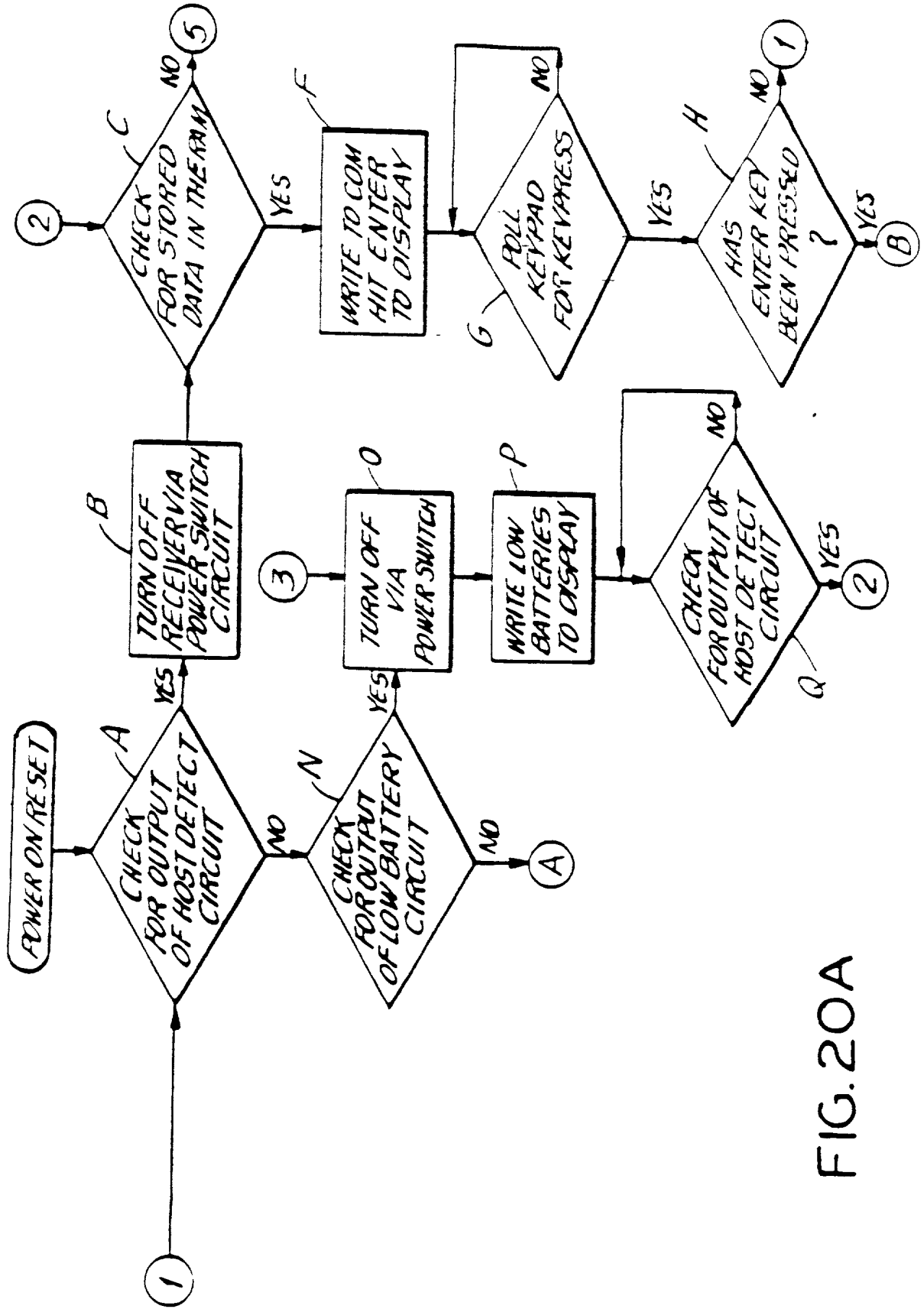


FIG. 20A

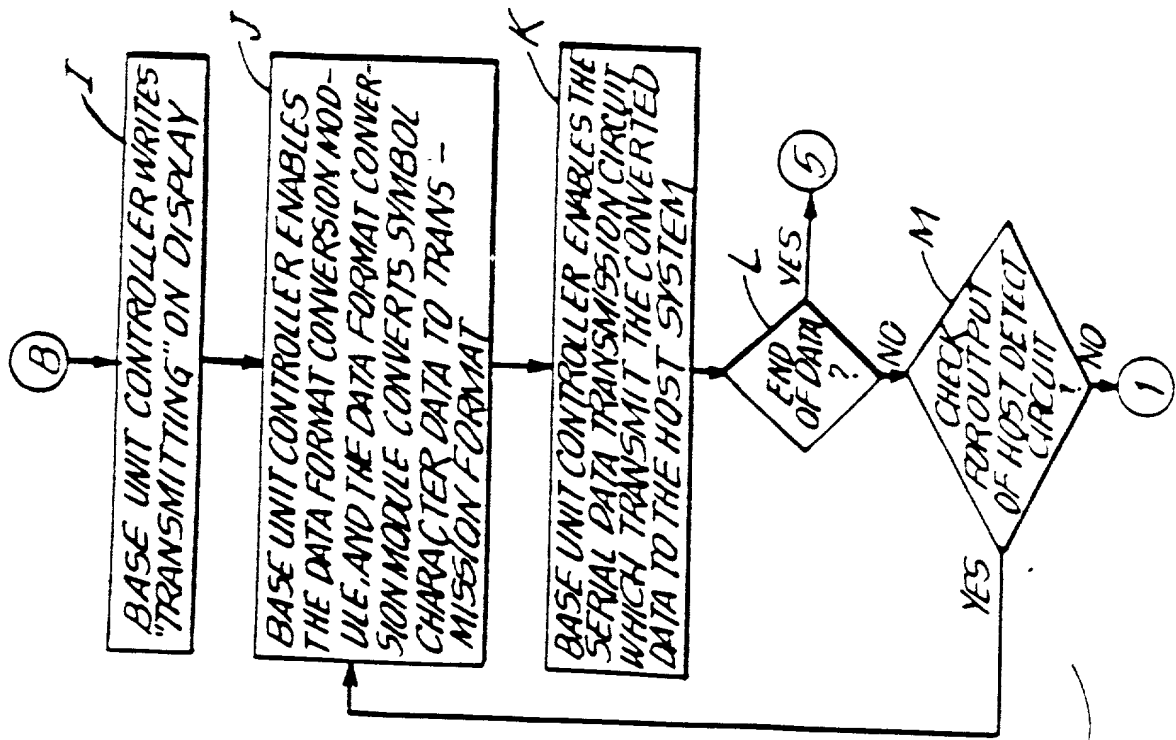
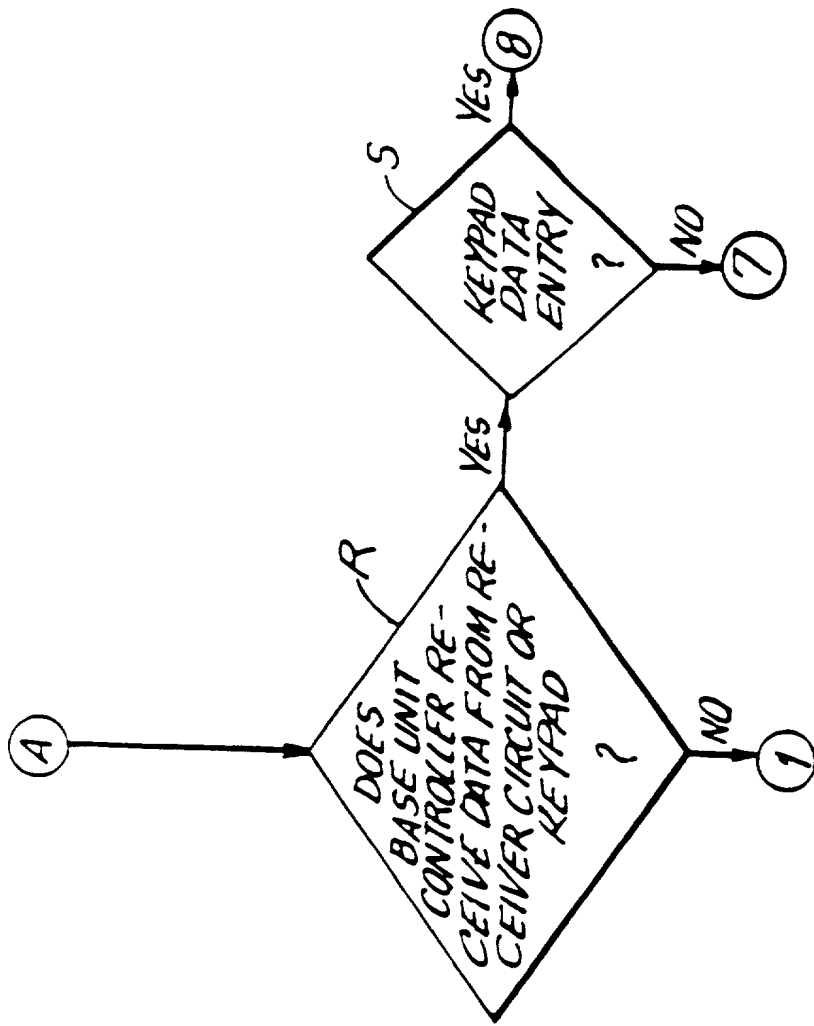


FIG. 20B

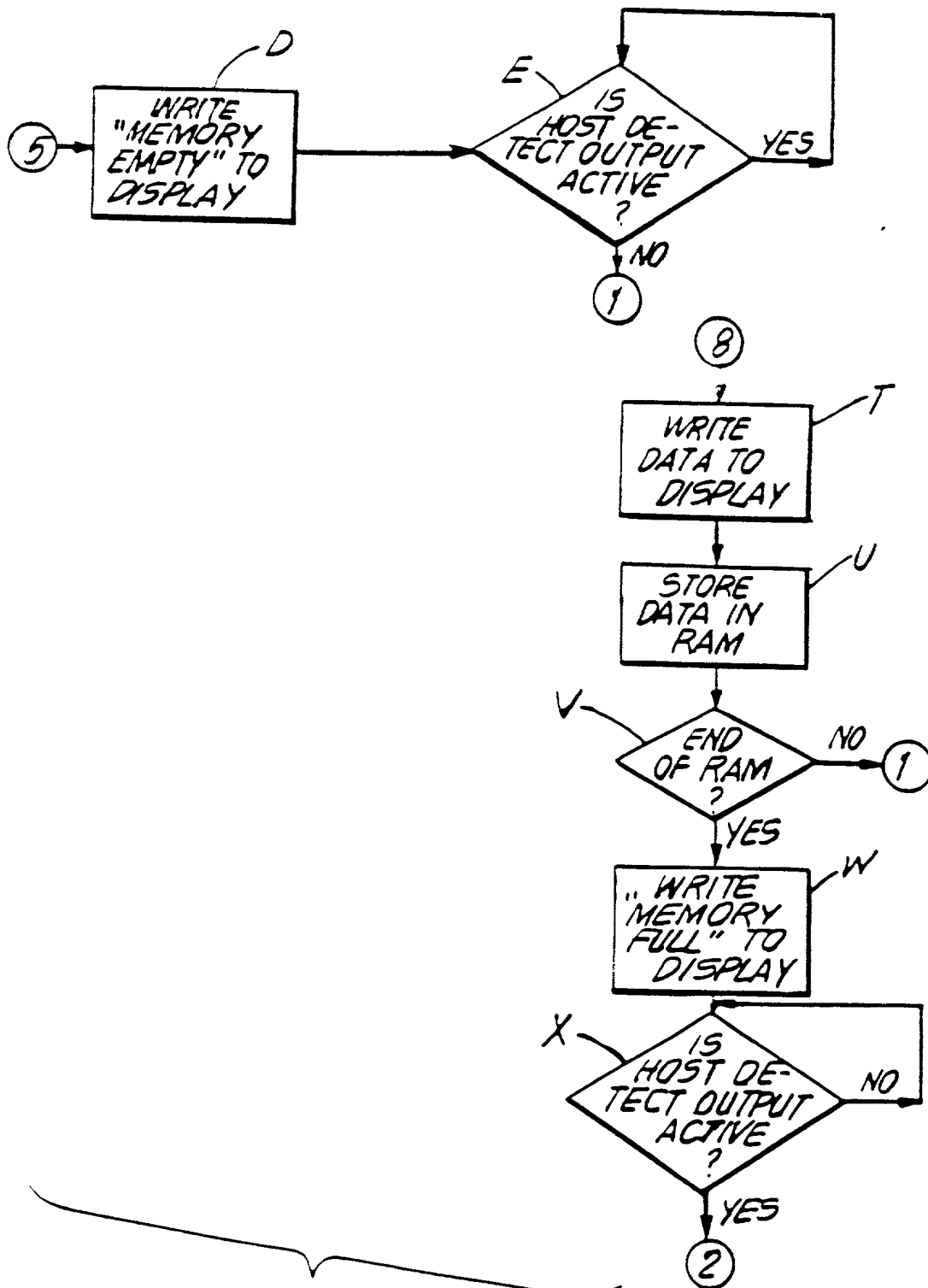


FIG. 20C

FIG. 20D is a flowchart illustrating a process for handling data packets in a base unit controller. The process begins at step 7, where the base unit controller enables the data packet storage buffer and the data packet frame check module. This leads to decision point Z, which checks if the base unit controller receives an acknowledgment indicating the data packet is properly framed. If the answer is YES, the process proceeds to step AA, where the base unit controller enables the transmitter number identification module. If the answer is NO, the process proceeds to decision point BB, which checks if the base unit controller receives an acknowledgment indicating the data packet contains the correct transmitter identification number. If the answer to BB is YES, the process proceeds to step CC, where the base unit controller enables the data packet group number identification module. If the answer to BB is NO, the process proceeds to decision point DD, which checks if the base unit controller receives an acknowledgment indicating the data packet received is not a redundant transmission from the same group. If the answer to DD is YES, the process proceeds to step EE, where the base unit controller enables the symbol character data extraction module and the symbol character data extraction module extracts symbol character data from the data packet. If the answer to DD is NO, the process proceeds to step FF, where the base unit controller enables the acoustical acknowledgment signal generation circuit and the acoustical acknowledgment signal generation circuit generates audible user feedback. The process then loops back to step 7.

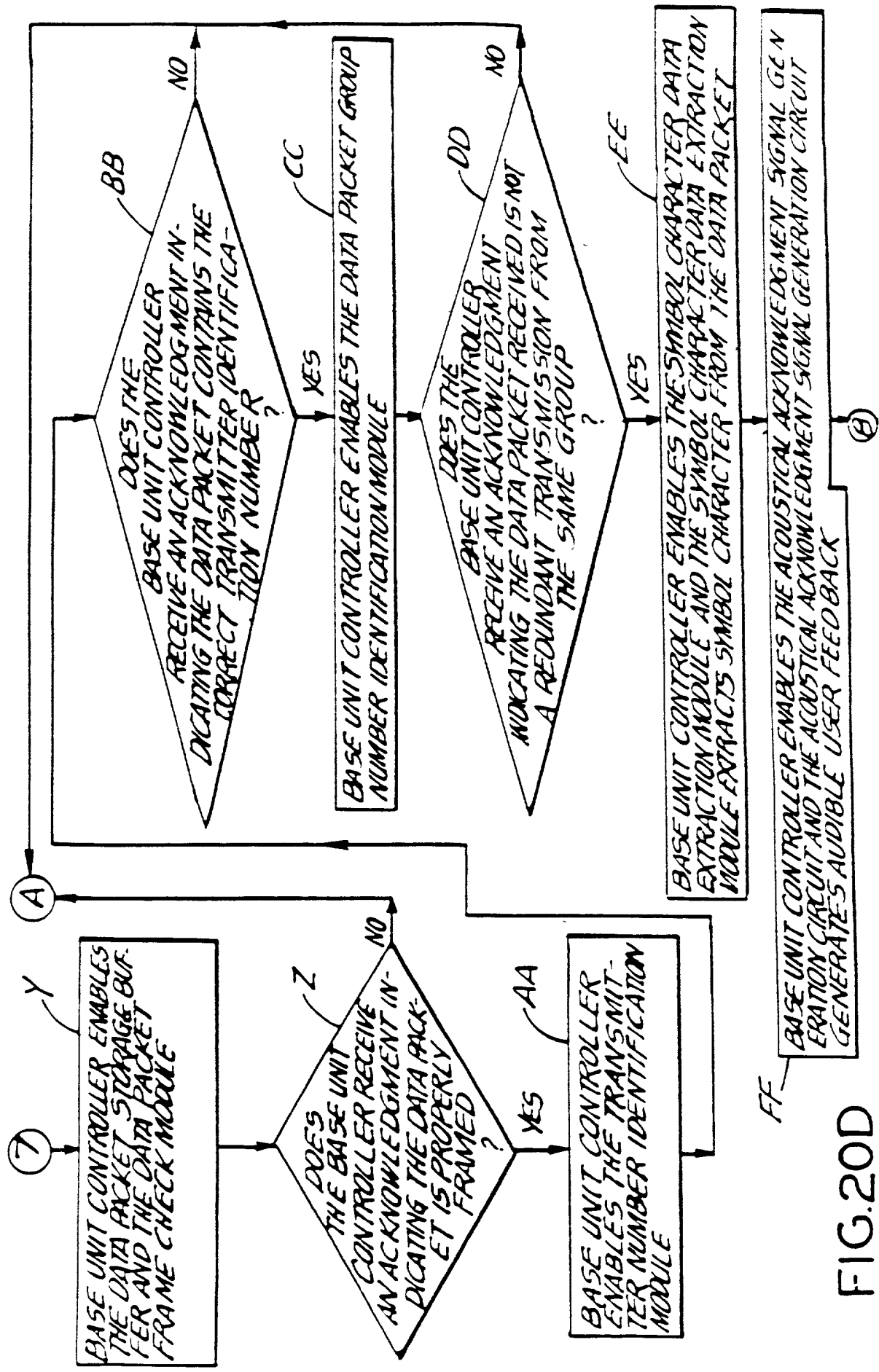


FIG. 21 is a perspective view of the device 360 in an open position, showing the keypad 361 and the display 362. The device 360 is shown in a perspective view, with the keypad 361 and the display 362. The device 360 is shown in a perspective view, with the keypad 361 and the display 362.

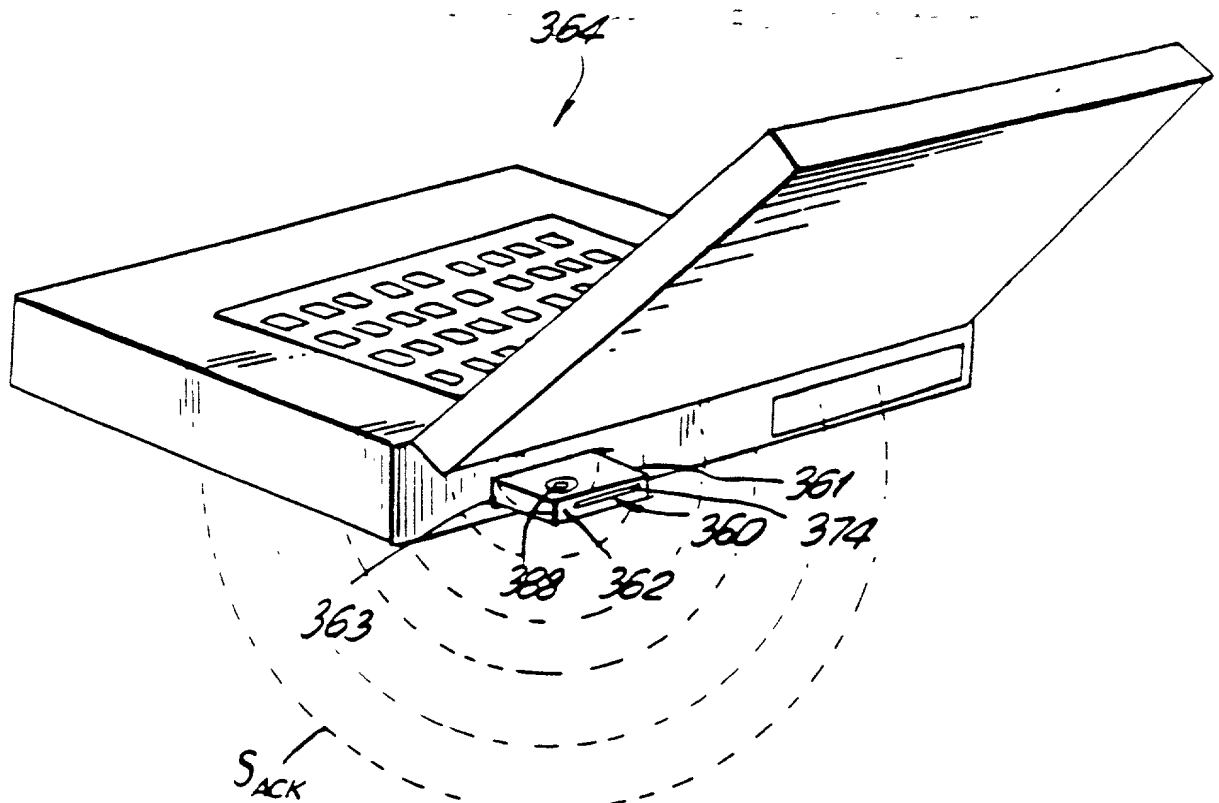


FIG. 21

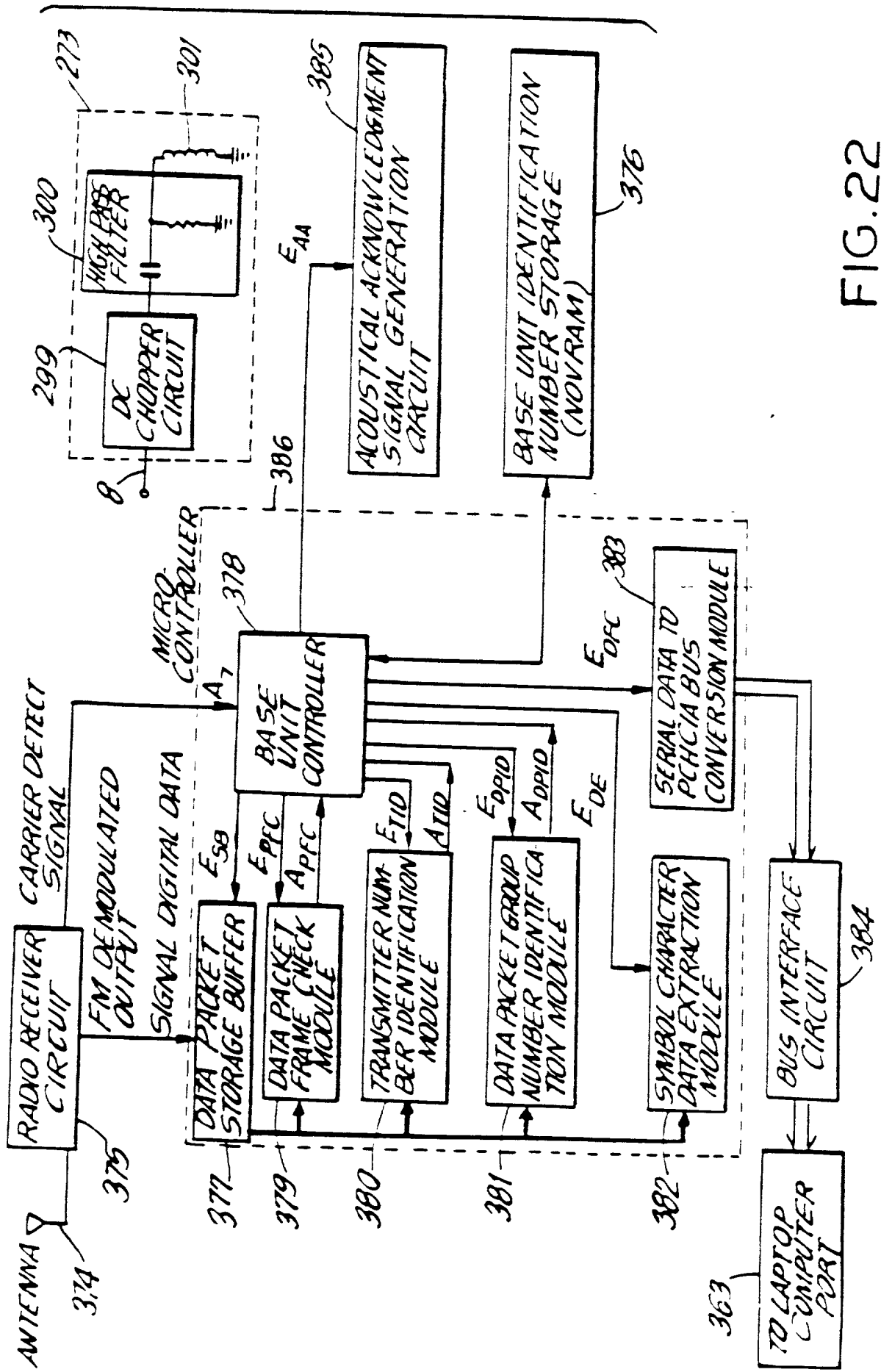


FIG.22

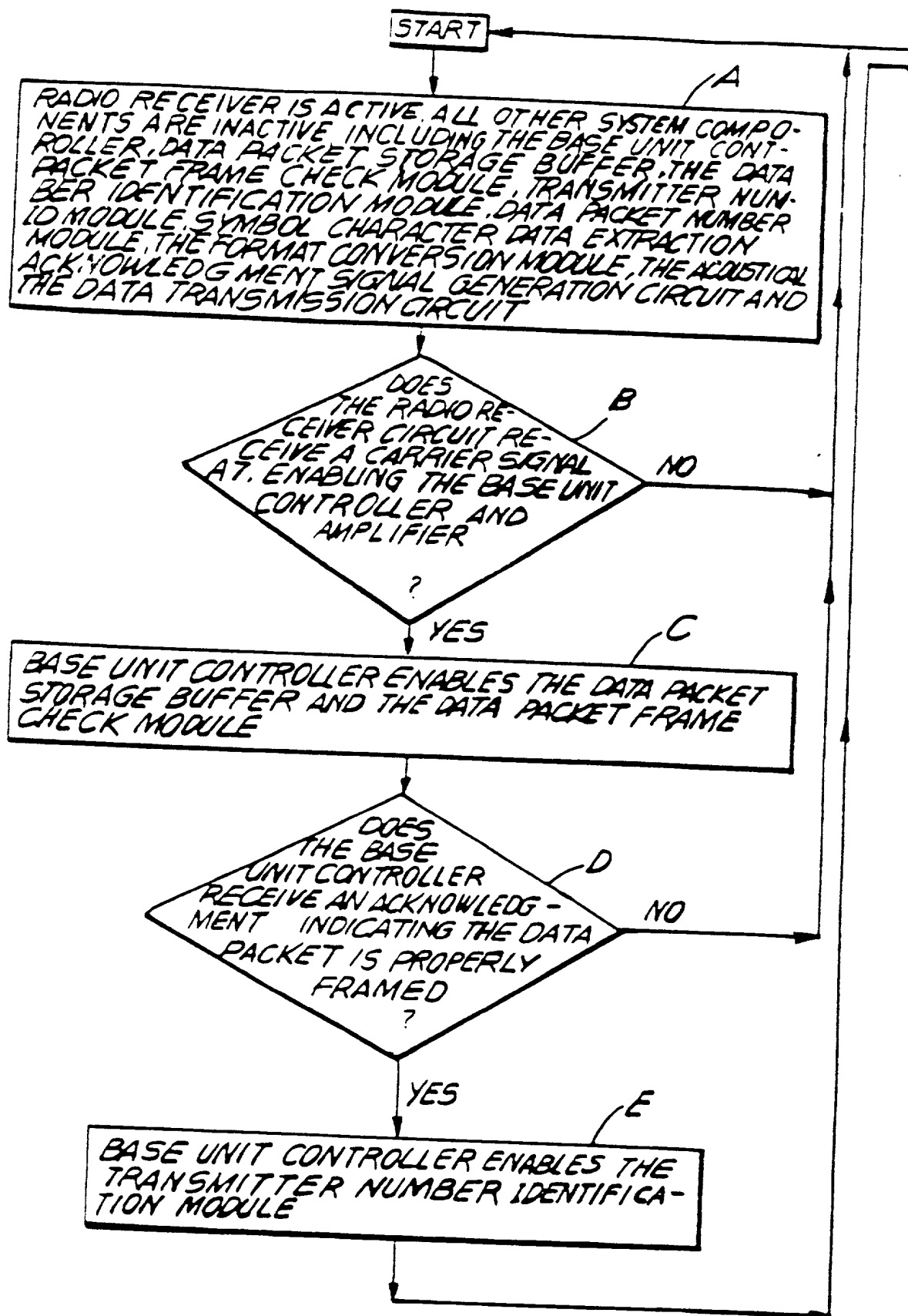


FIG.23

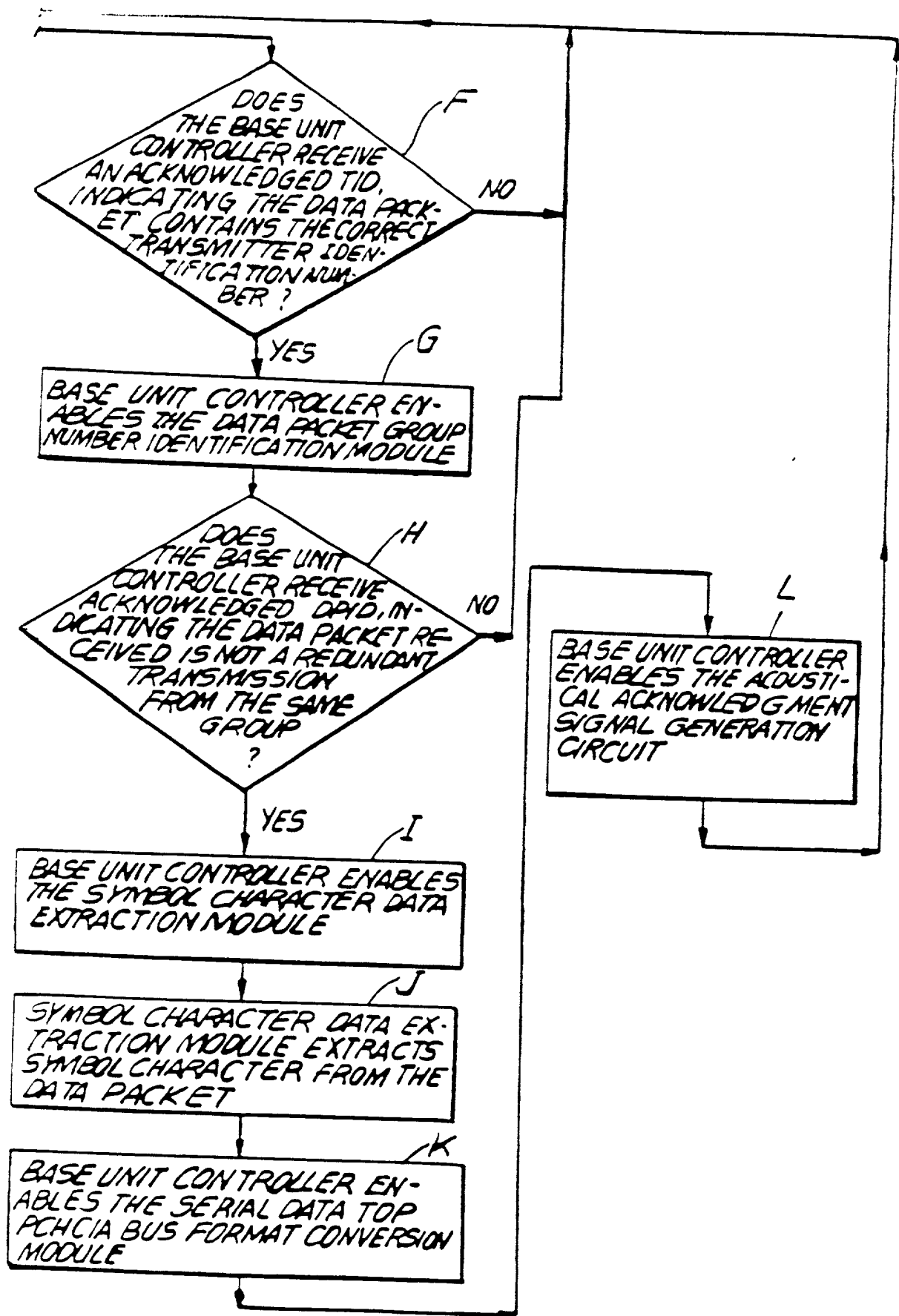
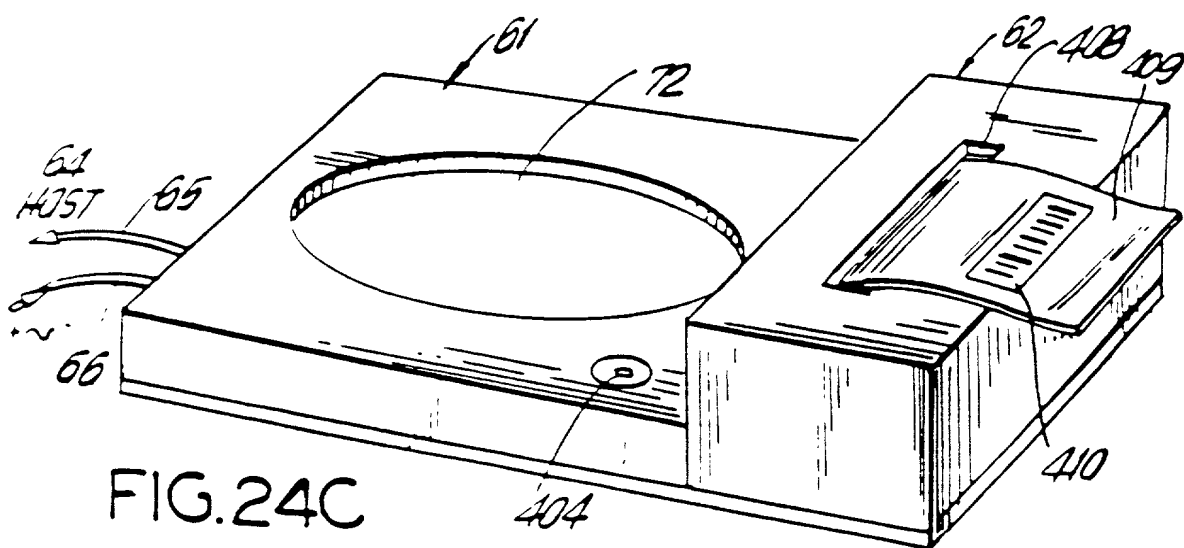
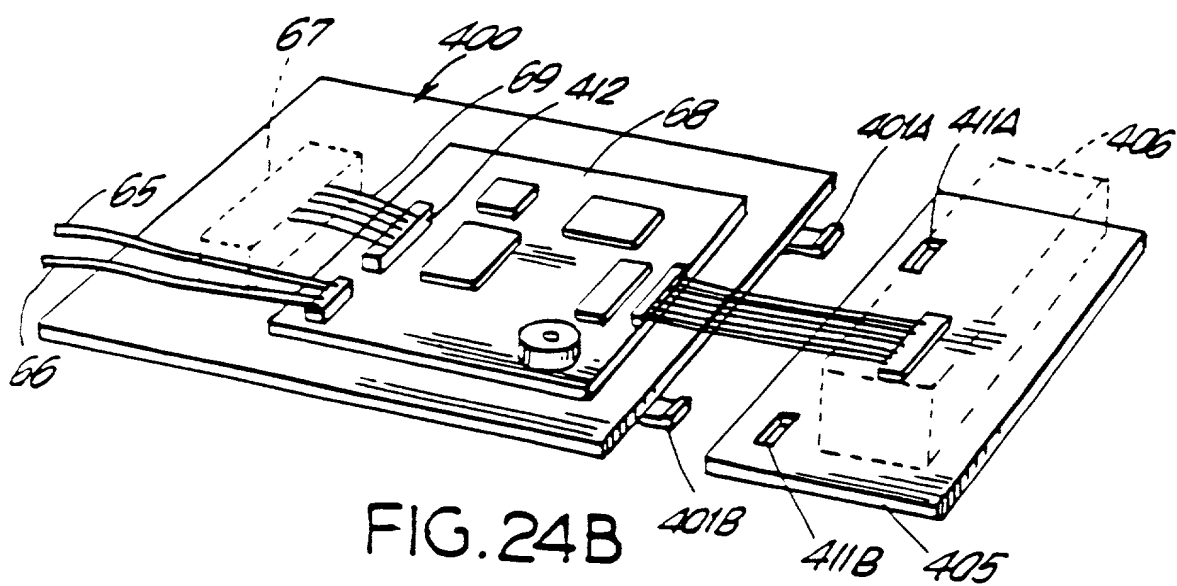
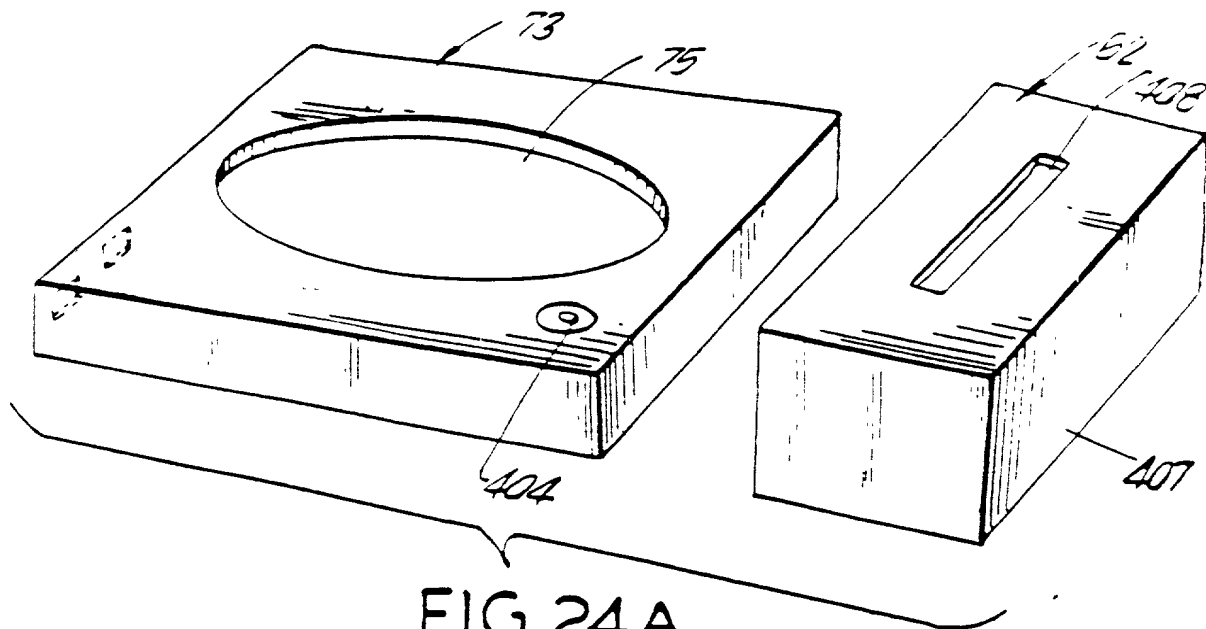


FIG. 23A



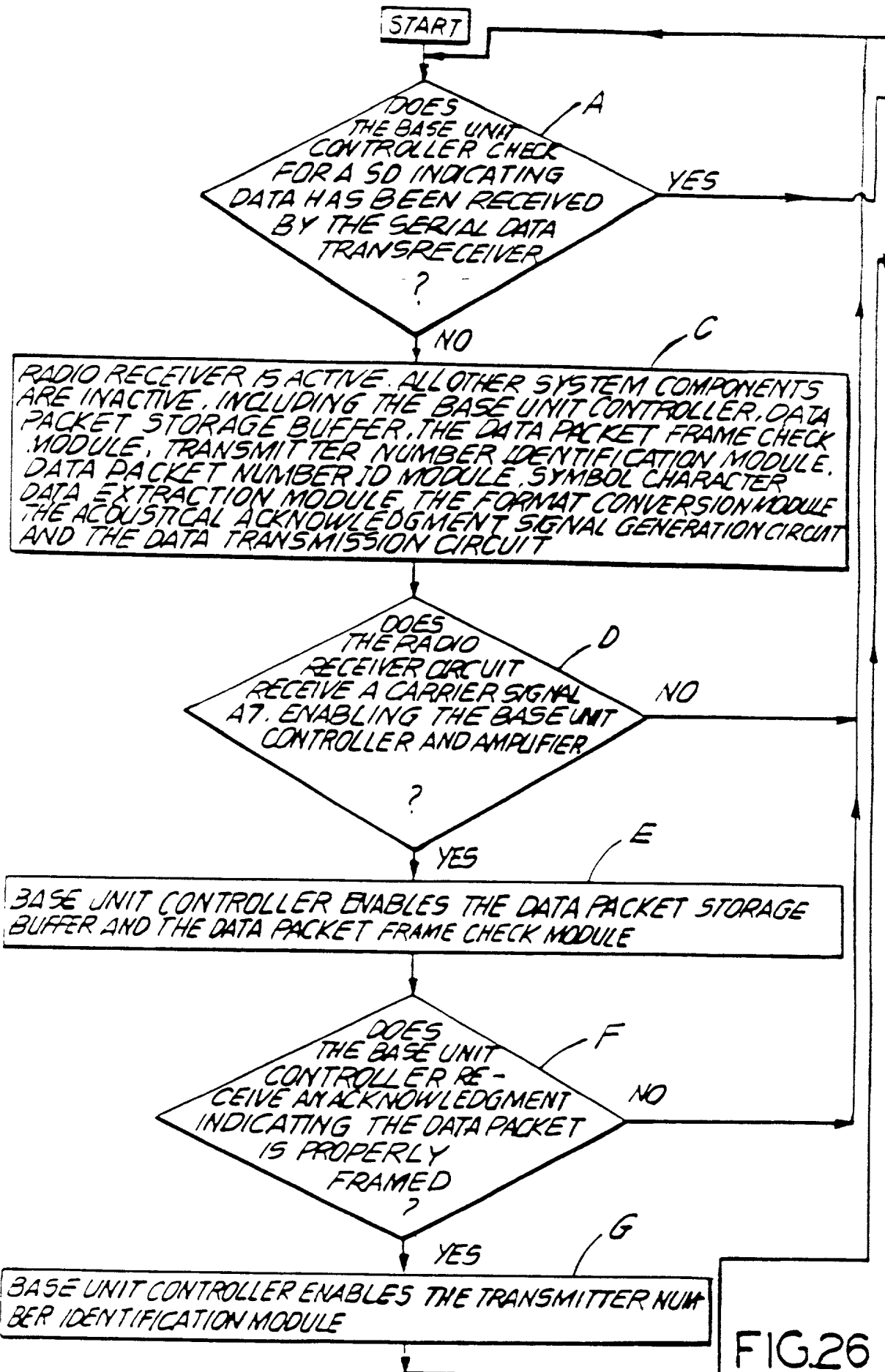


FIG.26

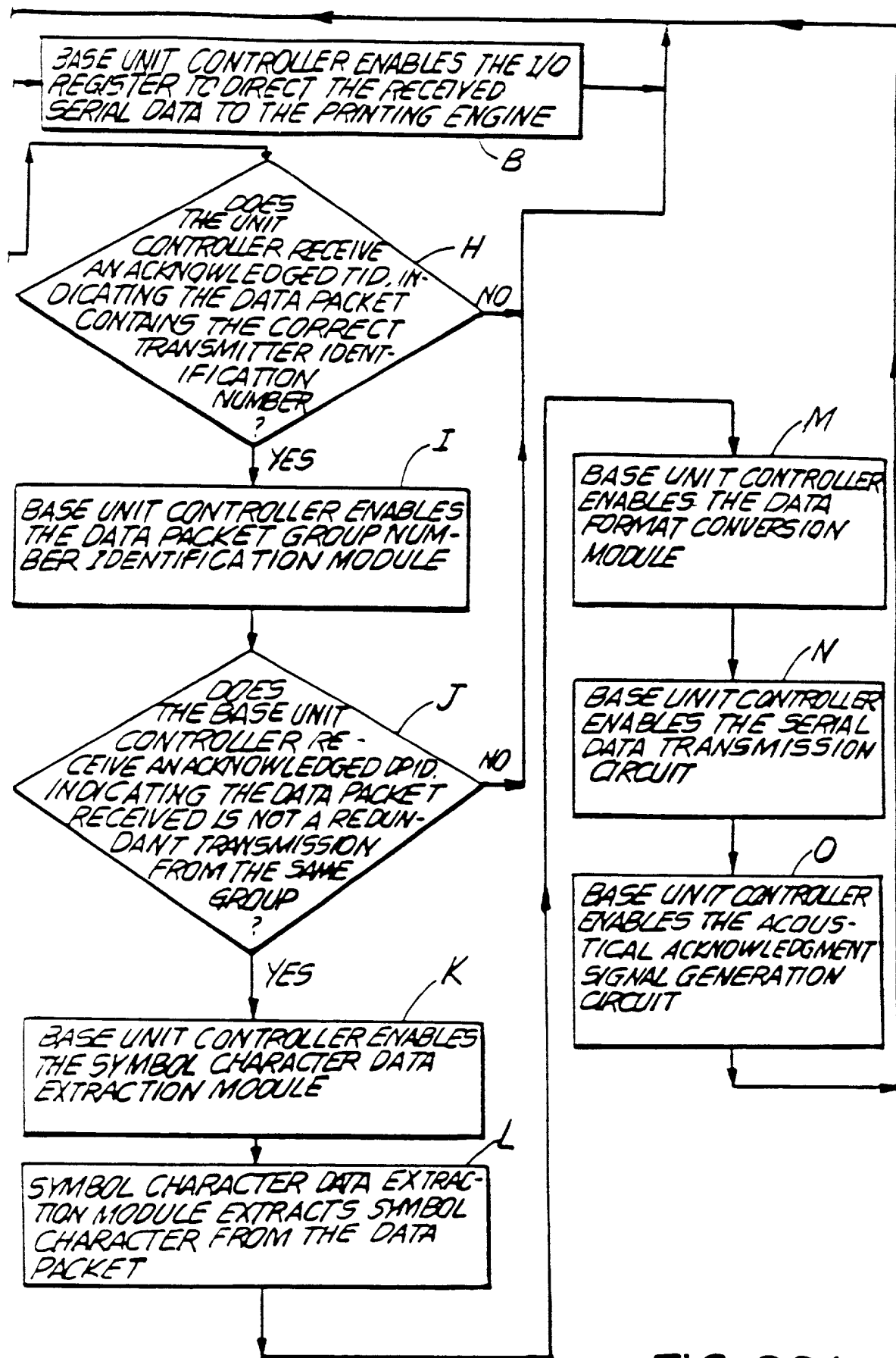


FIG. 26A

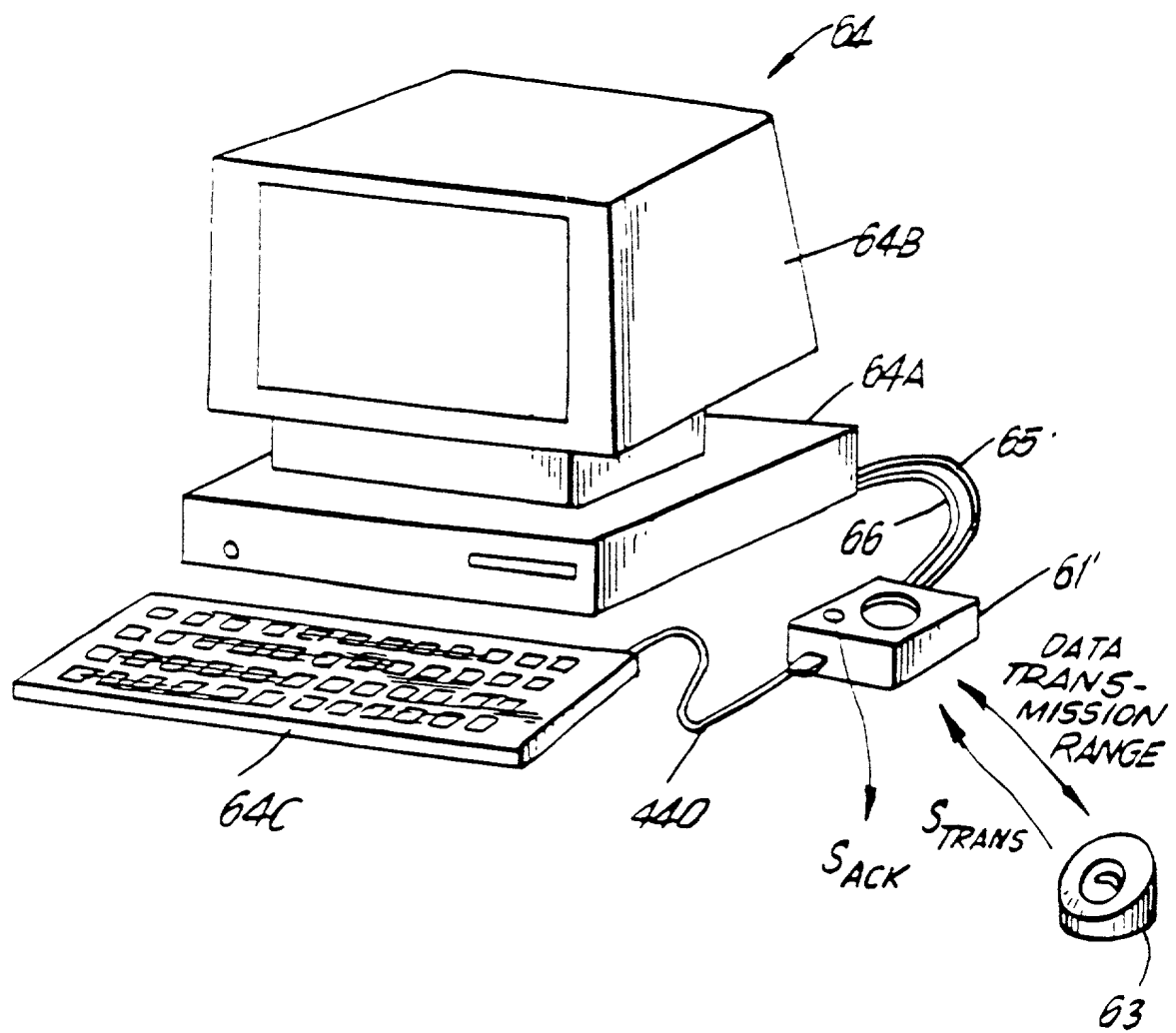


FIG.27

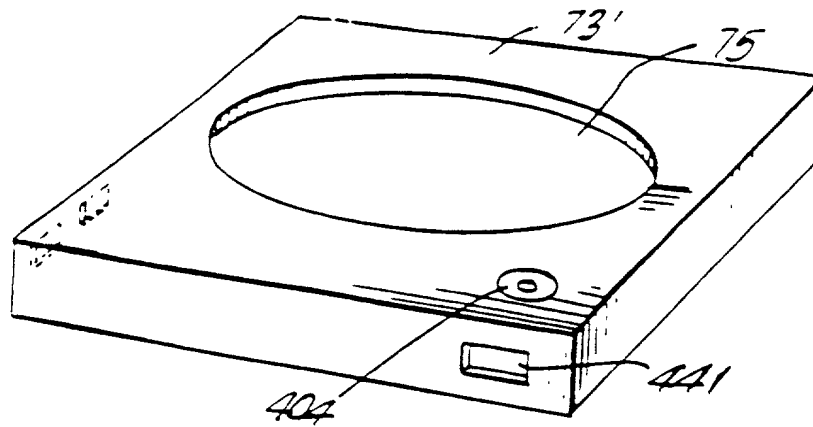


FIG. 28A

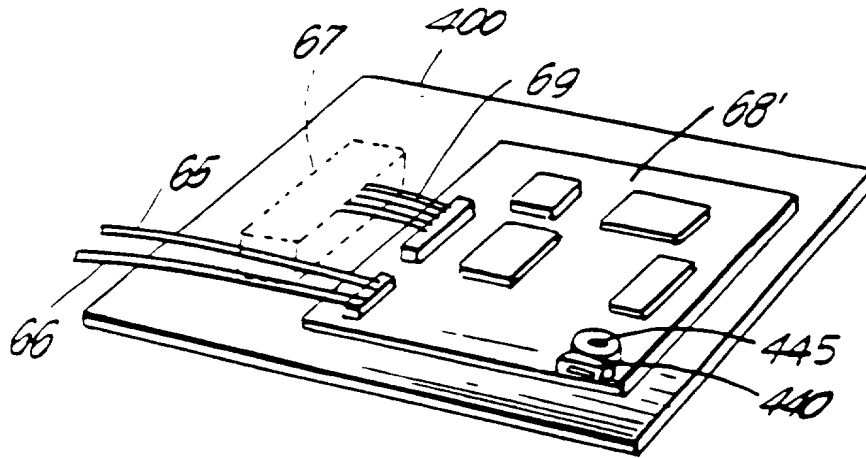


FIG. 28B

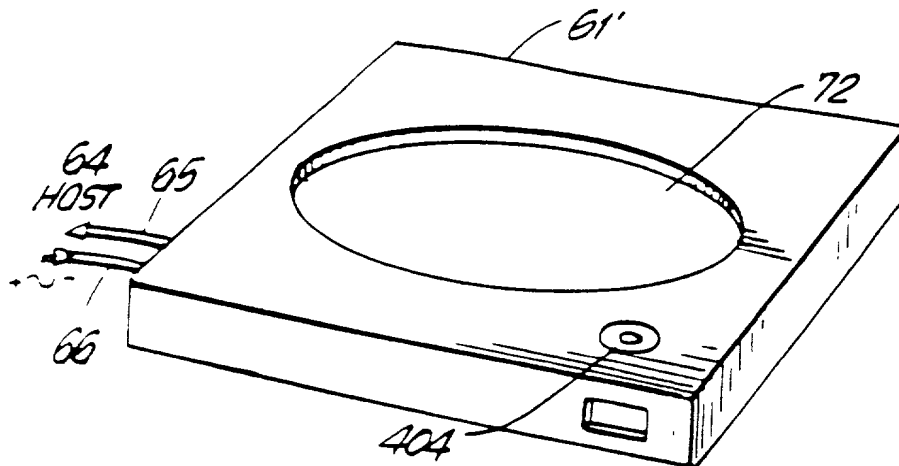


FIG. 28C

FIG. 28A is a perspective view of a rectangular electronic device with a circular opening on its top surface. The opening is labeled 73' and 75. A small circular feature is labeled 404, and a rectangular feature on the side is labeled 441.

FIG. 28B is a perspective view of the underside of the device. It shows several rectangular components labeled 65, 66, 67, 68', and 69. A dashed line indicates a connection between 65 and 67. A small circular feature is labeled 445, and a rectangular feature is labeled 440.

FIG. 28C is a perspective view of the device with a cable connected to its side. The cable is labeled 64 and 65, with 'HOST' written next to it. The device has a circular opening labeled 61' and 72. A small circular feature is labeled 404.

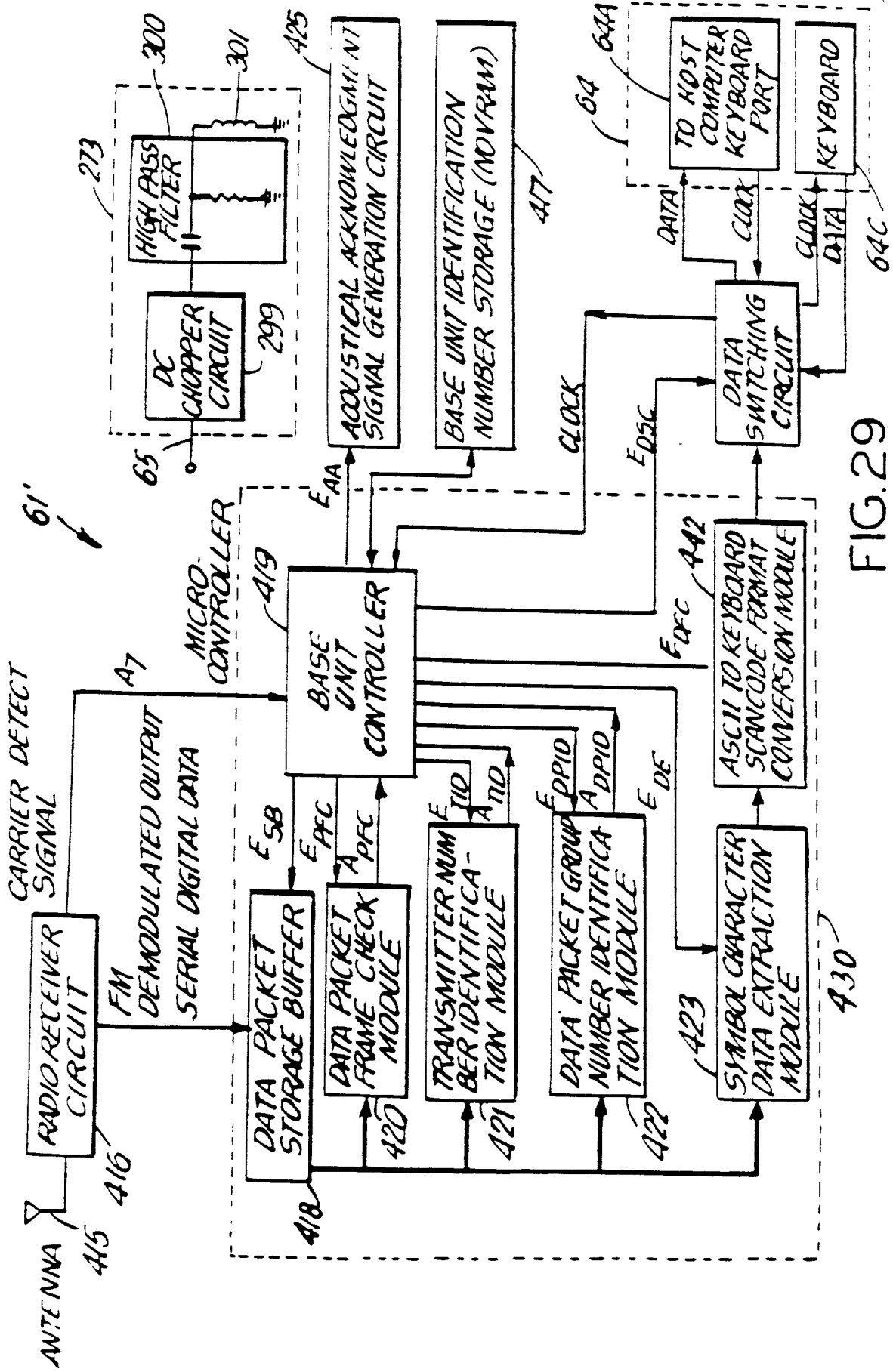


FIG. 29

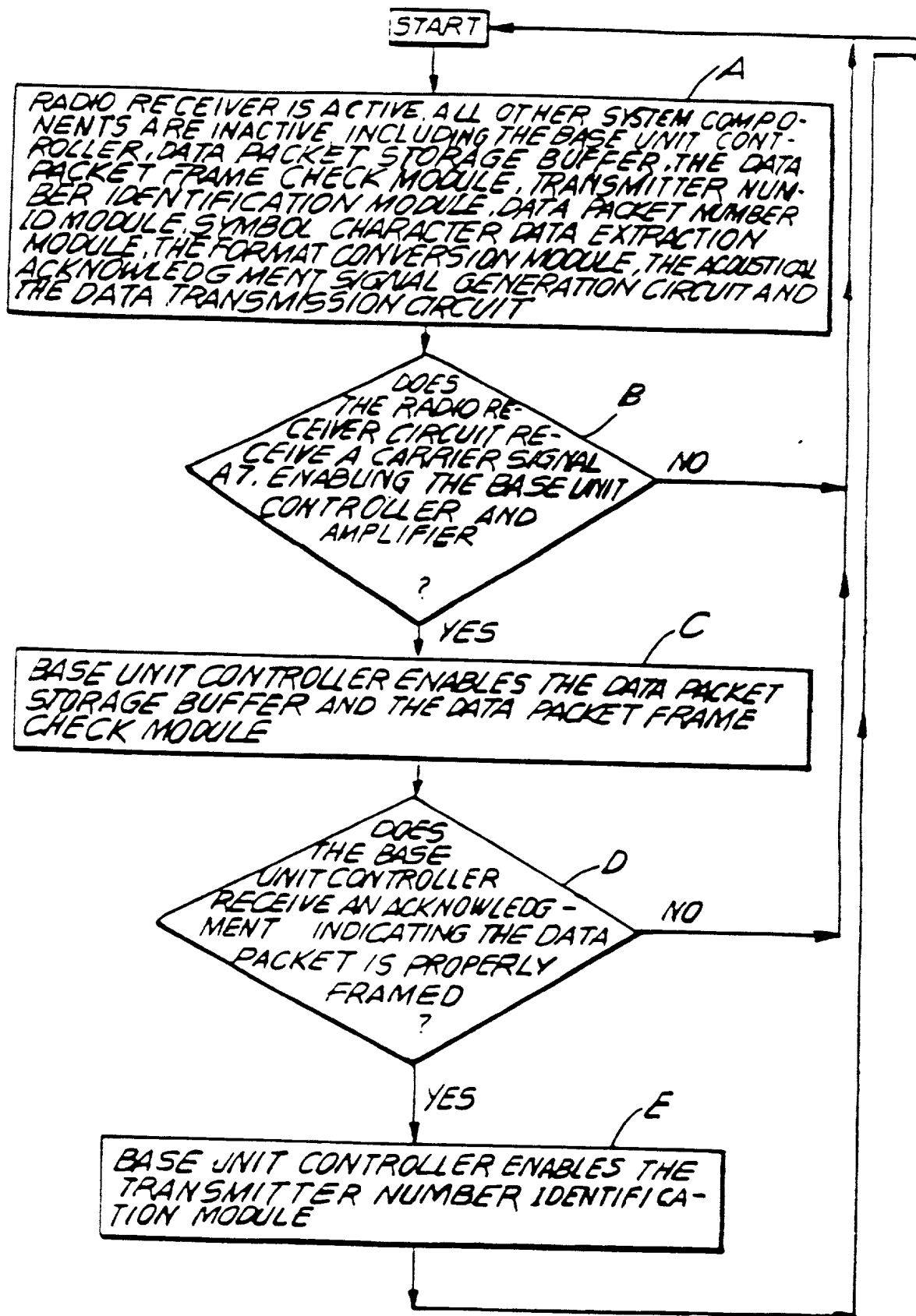


FIG. 30

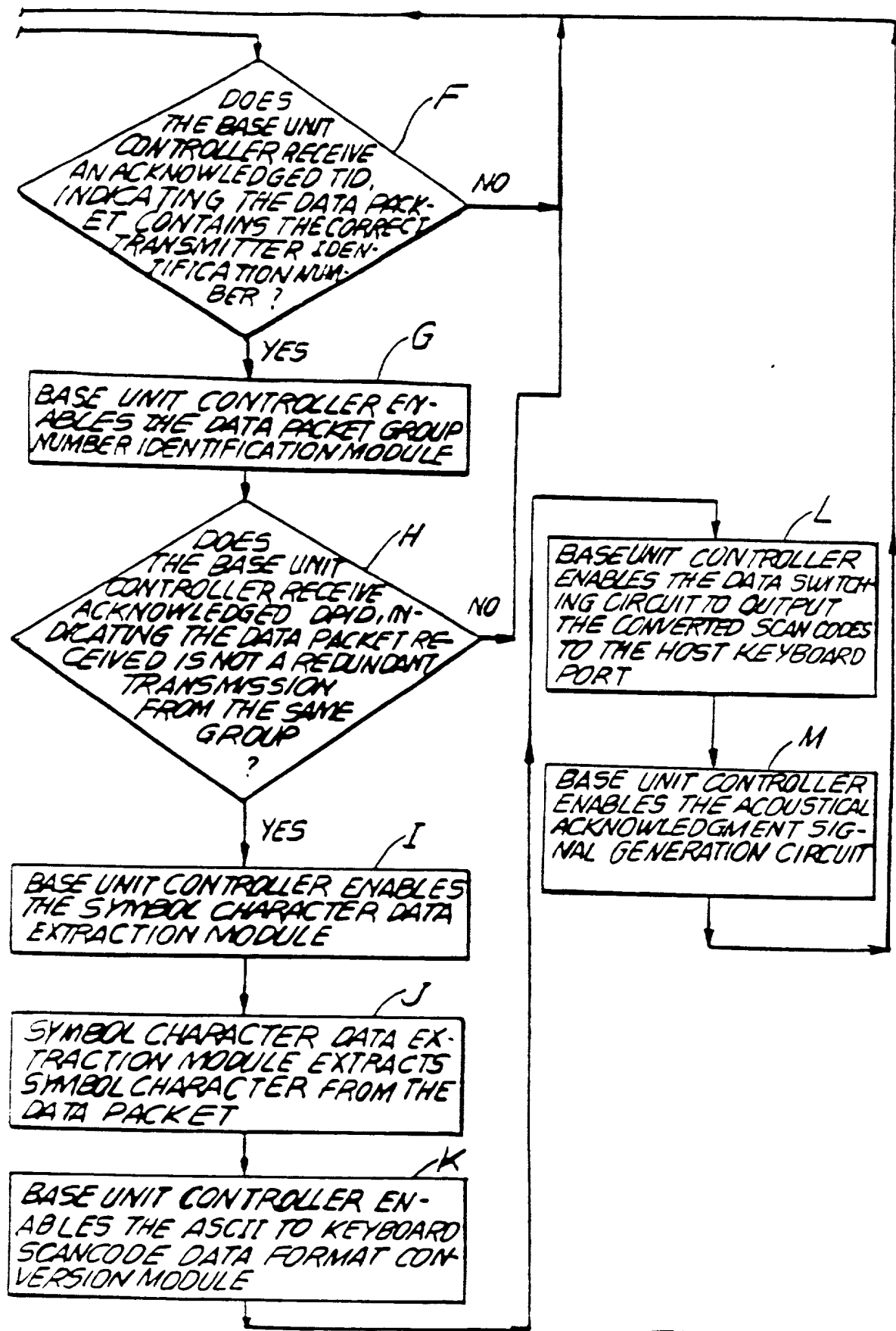
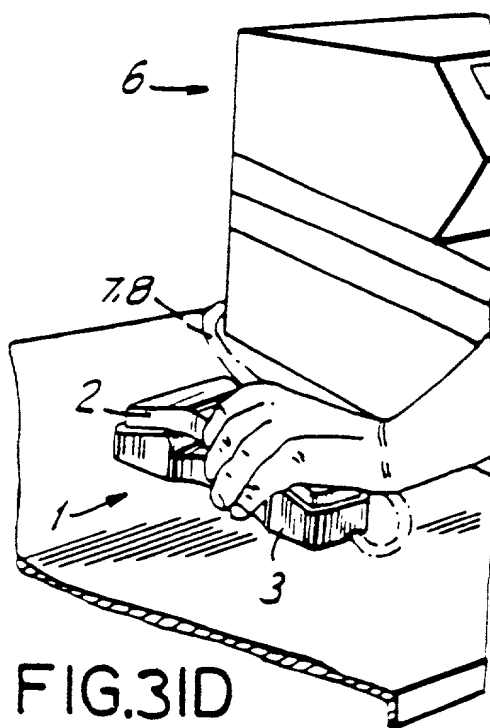
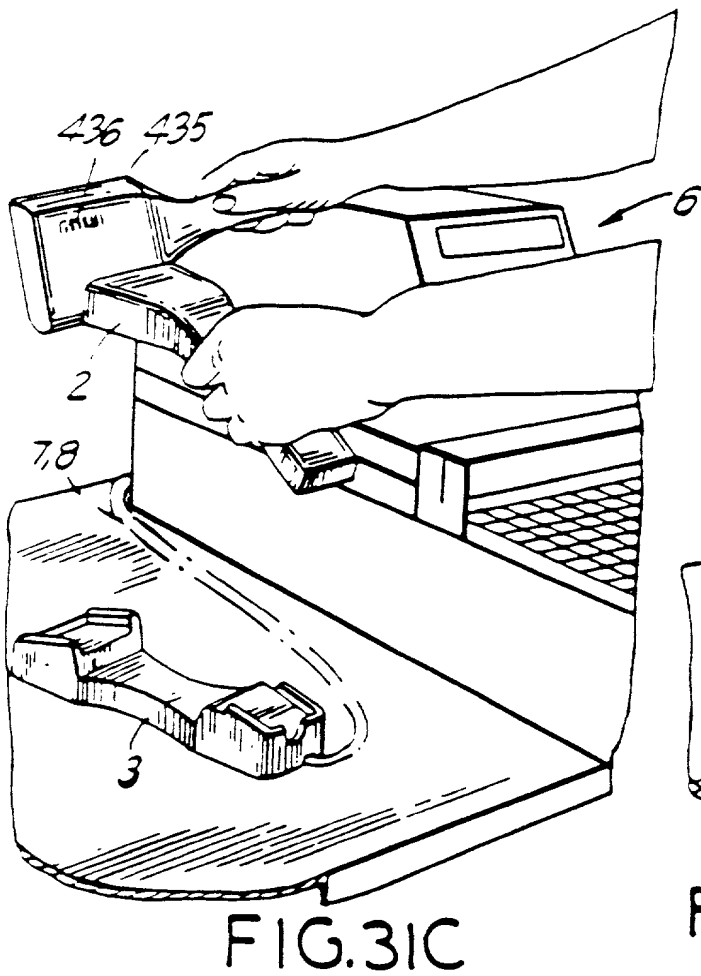
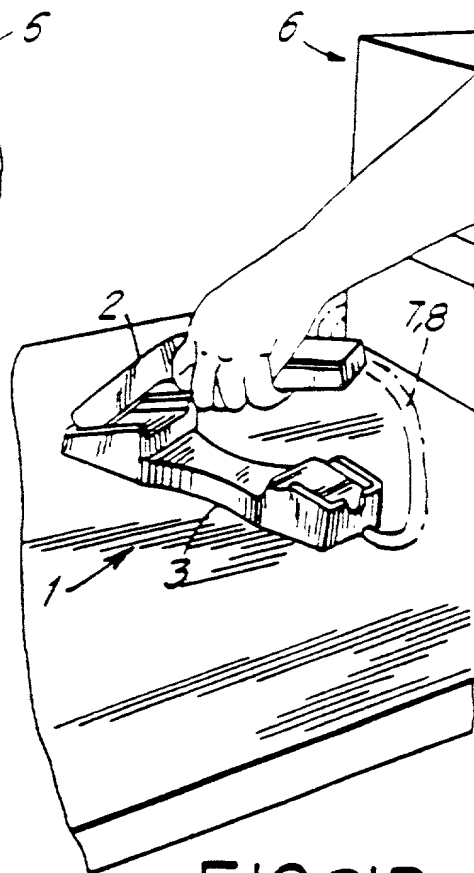
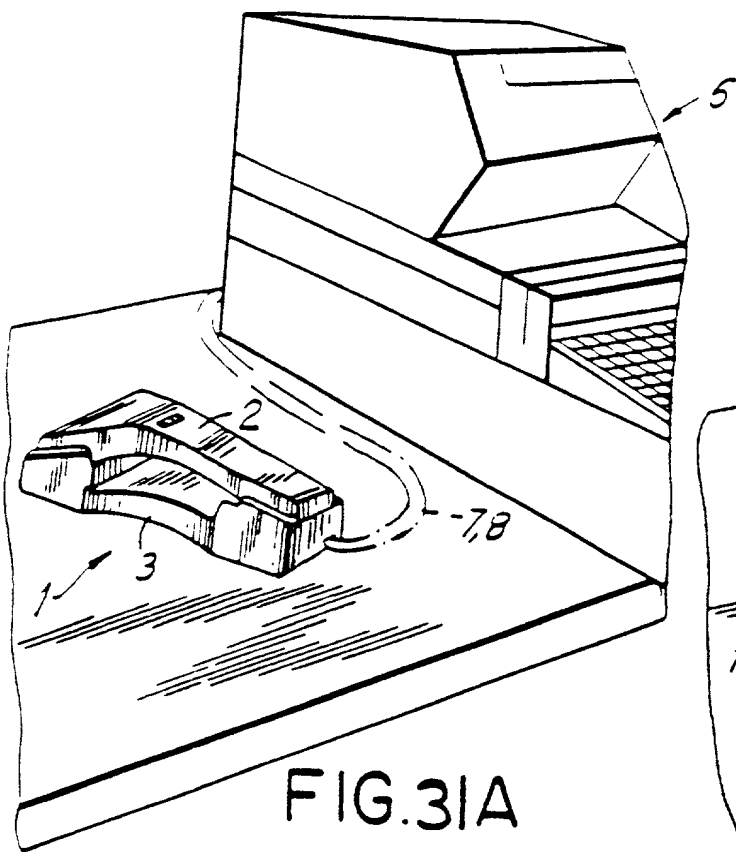


FIG. 30A



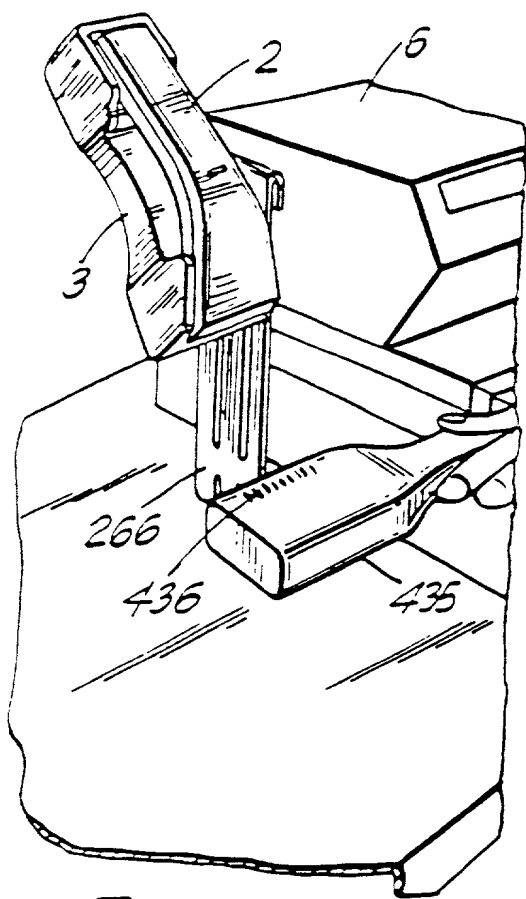


FIG. 32

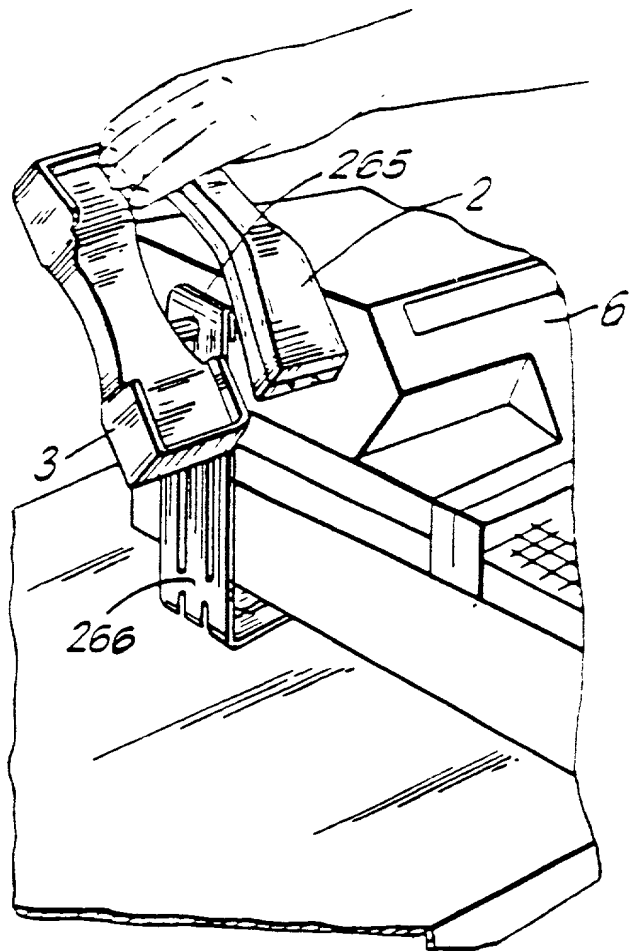


FIG. 33A

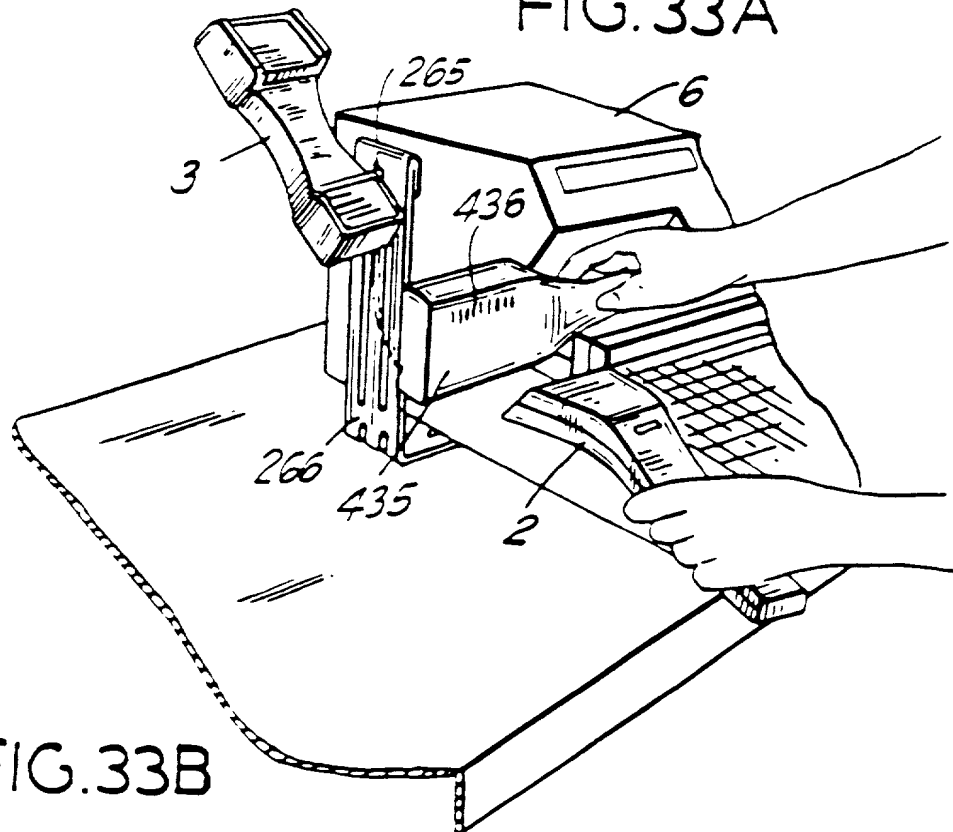


FIG. 33B

FIG. 32

COMBINED DECLARATION OF INVENTORSHIP AND POWER OF ATTORNEY

As the below named joint inventor, I hereby declare that:

My residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below next to my name,

I believe I am the original joint inventor of the invention disclosed and claimed in pending Application Serial No. 08/292,237 entitled AUTOMATIC BAR CODE SYMBOL READING SYSTEM AND METHOD OF READING BAR CODE SYMBOLS USING THE SAME filed August 17, 1994, for which a U.S. Letters Patent is sought.

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the Specification of the above-identified Application, including the Claims to Invention appended thereto.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to the examination of this application in accordance with Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, §1.56(a).

POWER OF ATTORNEY: As a named inventor, I hereby appoint the following attorneys to prosecute this application and transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith, Hopgood, Calimafde, Kalil & Judlowe, a firm consisting of Roy C. Hopgood, Reg. No. 15,245; John M. Calimafde, Reg. No. 16,895; Eugene J. Kalil, Reg. No. 16,686; Marvin N. Gordon, Reg. No. 23,094; Stephen B. Judlowe, Reg. No. 21,049; James M. Rhodes, Jr., Reg. No. 25,229; Francis J. Murphy, Reg. No. 24,537; Dennis J. Mondolino, Reg. No. 27,148; William G. Todd, Reg. No. 28,480; Ira B. Winkler, Reg. No. 29,223 and Thomas J. Perkowski, Reg. No. 33,134 at that firm.

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Combined Declaration of Inventorship
and Power of Attorney
08/292,237

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

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